

DOES A BEATING JUSTIFY LOVE?

A play in two acts

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CHARACTERS

(Characters can be doubled)

TEENAGE MONICA	African-American, the school virgin focused on graduating.
TEENAGE DEENA	African-American, Teenage Monica's friend.
TEENAGE CRAIG	African-American, star player on the basketball team.
TEENAGE JASON	African-American, another basketball player.
GWEN	Monica's mother
MONICA	She no longer has self-respect and is a victim of abuse.
CRAIG	He's a full-blown alcoholic.
DEENA	She's still Monica's friend.

SETTING

The story opens up in the school hallway.

TIME

The story is based in the present time.

SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1	School hallway	Afternoon
Scene 2	Boy's locker room	Same day
Scene 3	Monica's room	Night
Scene 4	The hall	Night
Scene 5	The hospital	Same night
Scene 6	Gwen's living room	Same night

ACT II

Scene 1	Monica and Craig's bedroom	Afternoon
Scene 2	The hospital	Same day
Scene 3	Monica and Craig's house/The kitchen	Night
Scene 4	Monica's job	Morning
Scene 5	Monica and Craig's house/The living room	Night
Scene 6	Gwen's living room	Same night
Scene 7	Monica and Craig's house/The living room	Same night
Scene 8	The bar	Same night

ACT I

Scene 1

Standing beside the lockers in the empty hallway is TEENAGE MONICA and TEENAGE DEENA.

Teenage Monica is wearing some baggy jogging pants and a sweater, while Teenage Deena is wearing something casual.

TEENAGE DEENA

What are you wearing to prom?

TEENAGE MONICA

I won't be attending.

TEENAGE DEENA

Why? You only get one prom.

TEENAGE MONICA

Should I be impressed?

TEENAGE DEENA

It's not about being impressed. It's about enjoying one last night with the people you know.

TEENAGE MONICA

Uh huh. Like I said, I won't be attending.

TEENAGE DEENA

I know why.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why?

TEENAGE DEENA

You're scared to leave your comfort zone.

TEENAGE MONICA

What is my comfort zone?

Teenage Deena points to Teenage Monica's clothes.

TEENAGE DEENA

These baggy clothes. You're scared to reveal your body.

Teenage Monica looks at her confused.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why should I reveal my body, when I get enough attention?

Teenage Deena breaks out laughing.

TEENAGE DEENA

What attention?

TEENAGE MONICA

I'm the only virgin in the graduating class. Need I say more?

TEENAGE DEENA

Long as you know it's not your looks.

TEENAGE MONICA

Ugly women tend to say that.

TEENAGE DEENA

I'm far from ugly. Come with something better.

TEENAGE MONICA

If you were worth the time, I would.

TEENAGE DEENA

Whatever. You're going, right?

TEENAGE MONICA

Why are you so pressed?

TEENAGE DEENA

Going to prom without my best friend wouldn't seem right.

TEENAGE MONICA

Uh huh.

TEENAGE DEENA

Seriously. You know we do everything together.

TEENAGE MONICA

I'll think about it.

TEENAGE DEENA

Girl, stop playing. You know you're coming.

TEENAGE MONICA

I said I'll think about it.

TEENAGE DEENA

What? You prefer sitting at home staring at the walls.

Teenage Monica is silent.

TEENAGE DEENA (CONT'D)

My point. When do you wanna look for a dress?

TEENAGE MONICA

I'll figure it out.

TEENAGE DEENA

I hope you don't pick something tacky.

TEENAGE MONICA

As long as I don't let you pick it, I'll be fine.

TEENAGE DEENA

What are you saying?

TEENAGE MONICA

Nothing, hotbox.

Teenage Deena breaks out laughing.

TEENAGE DEENA

Oh, I'm a hotbox?

TEENAGE MONICA

And my best friend.

TEENAGE DEENA

Whatever.

The two make their way off stage.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT I

Scene 2

Faint laughter and talking can be heard in the boy's locker room, where TEENAGE CRAIG and TEENAGE JASON sit on the bench in their basketball jersey's and shorts.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Who you got lined up for prom?

TEENAGE JASON

I don't know. There's so many to choose from.

Teenage Craig turns looking at him confused.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Living in that fantasy world again?

Teenage Jason looks at him confused.

TEENAGE JASON

Fantasy? Look at me.

He flexes his muscles.

Teenage Craig looks at him not impressed.

TEENAGE CRAIG

So?

TEENAGE JASON

What female can resist these guns?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Apparently a lot, considering you don't have a date.

TEENAGE JASON

Hater. Why did you ask?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Just wondering.

TEENAGE JASON

I do have my eye on Monica.

Teenage Craig releases a sarcastic laugh.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Is that right?

TEENAGE JASON

Who doesn't? But unlike them, I'll be the one taking her to prom, and her virginity.

TEENAGE CRAIG

You think so?

TEENAGE JASON

I don't have to think what I know.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I doubt either scenario happens.

TEENAGE JASON

Oh, let me guess. You'll be the one to do it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm not saying that.

TEENAGE JASON

Good. You don't have a chance with her anyway.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Why you say that?

TEENAGE JASON

You don't have the three things.

TEENAGE CRAIG

What are the three things?

Teenage Jason prepares to display what he's about to name off, standing to his feet.

TEENAGE JASON

The body. The looks. And the money.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Money?

TEENAGE JASON

Money makes women open their legs faster than you can flash it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I believe you're using the wrong word. Money doesn't make women respond the way you claim.

TEENAGE JASON

They all the same, Bro. Don't get it twisted.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Monica isn't that way.

TEENAGE JASON

What makes you so sure?

TEENAGE CRAIG

With a woman like Monica, you need the one thing you don't have.

Teenage Jason places his hand up to his ear.

TEENAGE JASON

I'm all ears.

TEENAGE CRAIG

The manners of a gentleman.

Teenage Jason breaks out laughing.

TEENAGE JASON

Women these days don't know what a gentleman is. All they know is money, and they'll use their body to get it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

So...why is Monica still a virgin?

TEENAGE JASON

I haven't put my game down, yet.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Even with this so-called "Game" you claim to have. Nothing will happen.

TEENAGE JASON

Are you sure about that?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I don't have to think what I know.

Teenage Jason extends his hand for a bet.

TEENAGE JASON

Put something on it.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm not betting on that.

TEENAGE JASON

Because you know I'll win?

TEENAGE CRAIG

No. I don't view women as objects to bet on.

Teenage Jason pulls his hand back.

TEENAGE JASON

You're admitting I'm right?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Think what you want.

TEENAGE JASON

I'll tell you how good it is.

TEENAGE CRAIG

You can't tell me what you'll never know.

TEENAGE JASON

Watch.

Teenage Craig makes his way off stage.

TEENAGE JASON

He hates the fact I'm right.

END OF THE SCENE

Act I

Scene 3

A bookshelf filled with books rests behind Teenage Monica's bed, along with a computer desk off to the side.

Teenage Monica is laid across the bed reading over a book, taking down notes.

GWEN comes into the room wearing something casual.

GWEN

Have you decided on a dress?

Teenage Monica places her book to the side and sits up on the bed, sighing.

TEENAGE MONICA

What is it with you and Deena?

GWEN

What?

TEENAGE MONICA

What's the big deal about prom?

GWEN

You don't consider this an important day?

TEENAGE MONICA

Dancing with a bunch of people you barely speak to. Guys trying to get you drunk after the dance, so they can have sex with you. No. I don't consider it important.

GWEN

Is that the real reason?

TEENAGE MONICA

Why wouldn't it be?

GWEN

I was thinking it's because you don't have date.

Teenage Monica scoffs, looking at Gwen offended.

TEENAGE MONICA

You don't think I can get a date?

GWEN

I know you can get a date, because you're beautiful like your mother. I just find it strange you don't wanna go.

TEENAGE MONICA

I have more important things on my mind.

GWEN

You need to have some fun, at some point in your life. You can always stay focused on your dreams, but have some fun. Don't end up alone, relying on a toy for satisfaction.

Teenage Monica laughs.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Go have some fun. Your goals will get accomplished.

TEENAGE MONICA

...I'll go.

GWEN

You'll probably end up meeting the one.

TEENAGE MONICA

I doubt it.

GWEN

Girl, just go have fun.

TEENAGE MONICA

Okay.

GWEN

I love you.

TEENAGE MONICA

I love you, too.

Gwen walks out the room.

Teenage Monica sits sighing shaking her head.

TEENAGE MONICA

Nothing is going to happen that will change my life.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT I

Scene 4

Students are dressed up for prom, dancing to the music playing.

Teenage Monica comes on stage wearing a fitted powder blue dress with her hair down.

She makes her way over to the table picking up a cup prepared to pour some punch, when Teenage Jason comes over wearing a black Tuxedo taking the cup from her.

She looks at him confused.

TEENAGE MONICA

Can I help you?

TEENAGE JASON

A woman with your beauty shouldn't pour her own punch.

TEENAGE MONICA

What?

TEENAGE JASON

This is a job for a gentleman.

TEENAGE MONICA

You're treating me nice, because?

TEENAGE JASON

I always liked you.

TEENAGE MONICA

Don't give me that. This devastating body has you acting up.

TEENAGE JASON

I was thinking---

TEENAGE MONICA

You would take my virginity tonight?

He clears his throat embarrassed, followed with a nervous laugh.

TEENAGE JASON

Why you say that?

TEENAGE MONICA

Considering everyone in school knows I'm a virgin, and this goofball look on your face.

He fixes his clothes, clearing his throat again.

TEENAGE JASON

I'll be honest with you. My limo is outside. After the dance, we should go for a ride. Have a drink or two. Maybe go down by the water---

TEENAGE MONICA

And give you some, right?

TEENAGE JASON

I was thinking---

TEENAGE MONICA

This conversation is over.

She gets ready to walk away, and he grabs her arm.

TEENAGE JASON

Don't act like you don't want me, girl.

Teenage Monica breaks out laughing.

TEENAGE MONICA

If I wanted you, I could have you. Since that's not the case. You can let my arm go, please and thank you.

Teenage Craig walks on stage wearing a black suit walking over to the two, standing behind Teenage Jason.

TEENAGE JASON

Don't tease me, slut. You can play that innocent role with everybody else, but me.

She snatches her arm away.

TEENAGE MONICA

You got the wrong one. Get yo trifling self away from me.

He gets ready to grab her again, and Teenage Craig grabs him by the back of the neck making him fold over.

TEENAGE CRAIG

What's the problem? She said leave her alone.

Teenage Jason is bending forward with a look of pain on his face and in his voice, trying to break the grasp.

TEENAGE JASON

What's wrong with you, man?

TEENAGE CRAIG

The fact you're bothering her, is bothering me.

TEENAGE JASON

And you care...

Teenage Craig squeezes harder.

TEENAGE CRAIG

This conversation is over, right?

Teenage Jason shakes his head yes.

Teenage Craig lets him go, followed with a push.

TEENAGE CRAIG (CONT'D)

I think you and your drinks need to find someone else.

TEENAGE JASON

When did you start caring about her? You got the same thought of---

TEENAGE CRAIG

The same thought of doing to you, what you're thinking about doing to me. Get moving.

TEENAGE JASON

I'll get you.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Yeah, okay.

Teenage Jason walks off stage.

Teenage Craig focuses his attention to Teenage Monica.

TEENAGE MONICA

I had that under control.

TEENAGE CRAIG

You probably did.

TEENAGE MONICA

I did.

TEENAGE CRAIG

A little extra help never hurts.

TEENAGE MONICA

Thanks.

TEENAGE CRAIG

No need for that. Enjoy the dance.

He gets ready to walk away, and she grabs his arm.

TEENAGE MONICA

Wait. Why did you help me?

He turns looking at her.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Two important things about women all men should know. One, she already knows if she wants you. And two, if she shows you no interest, it's best to leave her alone.

TEENAGE MONICA

Out of all these girls, you decided to rescue me?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm just making sure what I want is safe.

TEENAGE MONICA

And what is that?

TEENAGE CRAIG

You'll know if you give it to me.

He walks off stage.

Teenage Deena walks on stage wearing a soft pink fitted dress, walking up behind Teenage Monica tapping her on the shoulder.

TEENAGE DEENA

Sexy, sexy.

Teenage Monica doesn't respond, standing in a trance.

TEENAGE DEENA (CONT'D)

Hello?

Teenage Monica turns around.

TEENAGE MONICA

Huh? Hey, what's up?

TEENAGE DEENA

What's wrong with you?

TEENAGE MONICA

Nothing. Just a little stunned.

TEENAGE DEENA

Are you sure?

TEENAGE MONICA

Yeah. Let's get on this floor.

The two mingle in with the other people dancing.

END OF THE SCENE

After the prom while in the parking lot, Teenage Monica and Teenage Deena come close to being victims of rape by Teenage Jason and his friends. Luckily for them, Teenage Jason comes to the rescue, but unfortunately...he gets his ankle broken in the process.

ACT I

Scene 5

Teenage Craig lies on the hospital bed wearing a hospital gown, with his ankle wrapped up.

Gwen and Teenage Monica are standing beside Teenage Craig bedside. Teenage Monica is still wearing her dress, and Gwen is wearing something casual.

GWEN

Thank you for helping my daughter.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Any man would've done the same.

TEENAGE MONICA

You and I know that's a lie. The only way any other male would've helped is if they knew I would give them some.

He does a slight chuckle.

TEENAGE CRAIG

That's true.

GWEN

Regardless of the fact, I appreciate what you did. Your parents taught you well.

TEENAGE CRAIG

The thanks would go to my grandmother. She's the one who taught me the rules of life, as far as how to treat a female.

GWEN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you.

TEENAGE CRAIG

No offense taken. My grandparents were forced to raise me, because of my parent's domestic violence issues.

GWEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'm fine with it. The situation helped me become a better man.

GWEN

At least you didn't let it hold you down. Well, I'll leave you two alone. Thank you, once again.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Not a problem.

Gwen walks out the room.

TEENAGE MONICA

I would've never thought that about your parents.

Teenage Craig takes a deep breath, exhaling sharply.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Yeah. My alcoholic father beats on my mother, and my mother feels she can't find love in another man.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why does she feel she can't move on?

TEENAGE CRAIG

She feels since he's the only man she's been with, there's no point in trying to move on.

TEENAGE MONICA

She's in denial of the truth, believing in blind love.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Indeed. Watching those two growing up, I came to the conclusion I'll never take a drink.

TEENAGE MONICA

That's a wise choice.

TEENAGE CRAIG

You think so?

TEENAGE MONICA

If that's what made you the man you are now, yes.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Thank you.

TEENAGE MONICA

You're welcome. Can you tell me what you wanted from me?

TEENAGE CRAIG

Truthfully?

She stares at him blushing, chuckling with a soft crush.

TEENAGE MONICA

Duh.

TEENAGE CRAIG

I wanted us to grab something to eat, and have a conversation getting to know each other better.

TEENAGE MONICA

That's it?

TEENAGE CRAIG

That's it.

TEENAGE MONICA

You're in the hospital because you wanted to take me out?

He laughs, trying to hold back smiling.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Don't forget, I wanna know you better.

TEENAGE MONICA

Why didn't you just ask me out?

TEENAGE CRAIG

...Good point.

TEENAGE MONICA

What have you learned?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'll have to wait for my ankle to heal before I ask you on a date.

TEENAGE MONICA

And I'll be waiting.

TEENAGE CRAIG

Really?

TEENAGE MONICA

How can I not, and you're in here because of me?

TEENAGE CRAIG

I'll hold you to those words.

She leans down giving him a kiss.

TEENAGE MONICA

You just make sure to ask.

She makes her way out the room.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT I

Scene 6

Teenage Monica and Gwen are sitting on the sofa in the living room talking.

TEENAGE MONICA

What do you think about Craig?

Gwen takes a sip from her tea.

TEENAGE MONICA (CONT'D)

Well?

GWEN

He seems like a good man. I appreciate him helping you.

TEENAGE MONICA

But?

GWEN

It's something about his story.

TEENAGE MONICA

What about it?

GWEN

I can't put my finger on it, yet.

Teenage Monica shakes her head sighing.

TEENAGE MONICA

Oh, my God.

GWEN

What?

TEENAGE MONICA

How do you find something negative in everything? You nagged me to go. I was almost raped, and because of that, a good man is in the hospital. Now, here you are searching for negativity. Why?

GWEN

I'm not looking for negativity.

TEENAGE MONICA

Yes you are. He's a nice man, but it's something about him I can't place my finger on. I can't win with you. I believe I met someone who possibly cares about me, and doesn't want sex. Had I not went, you would've complained. What do you want from me?

GWEN

It doesn't matter what I want. I'm just sharing my thoughts.

TEENAGE MONICA

Considering I came up just fine without a father figure, I don't see how his situation is any different from mine.

GWEN

You two are completely different. Despite you didn't have your father, you had me. I made it my point to make sure you didn't come up like me. If that's the scenario you wanna use to make yourself feel comfortable, you go right ahead. I'll keep my thoughts to myself.

TEENAGE MONICA

That would be a first.

GWEN

And it won't be the last. Technically, you're grown. It's time for you to learn things on your own.

TEENAGE MONICA

I'm glad you recognize it.

GWEN

Don't think for a second I won't be here to protect you.

TEENAGE MONICA

I know you will. I just wanna give this a try.

GWEN

My baby girl grew up so fast.

TEENAGE MONICA

I'll always be your baby girl.

Gwen smiles holding back from crying.

The two hug.

GWEN

My baby girl. I hope this works for you.

TEENAGE MONICA

Thank you.

The two hug again.

END OF THE SCENE

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

Time goes by and Monica and Craig end up married, expecting their first child.

Craig is sitting on the bed in their nicely furnished bedroom wearing a wife beater and shorts watching the basketball game with a look of anguish, rubbing the ankle he had broken.

Monica walks in wearing a two piece business suit. You can see her five month stomach poking out.

She walks over to Craig giving him a kiss on the cheek.

MONICA

How's my baby?

CRAIG

I'm okay.

MONICA

Are you hungry?

CRAIG

Nope.

MONICA

What's wrong?

CRAIG

Just leave me alone.

MONICA

What's with the attitude?

She goes over to the closet.

CRAIG

I'm watching my career I couldn't pursue.

She turns looking at him.

MONICA

What are you talking about?

CRAIG

Not being in the NBA.

MONICA

Baby, I understand your pain. Sadly, there's nothing that can be done.

CRAIG

I should've let what was about to happen go down.

MONICA

Are you serious?!

Craig doesn't respond.

MONICA (CONT'D)

I figured you'd turn out this way!

She walks out the room.

Craig gets up following her, stopping her on the steps.

CRAIG

Turn out like what?!

MONICA

Nobody asked you to intervene!

CRAIG

You're so stupid!

MONICA

Watch my stupid ass walk out the door.

She gets ready to walk away, and he grabs her arm.

CRAIG

Where are...

She slaps him across the face.

MONICA

Don't put your hands on me! You know damn well...

He backhands her, knocking her down the stairs.

She lands at the bottom not moving, moaning in pain.

CRAIG

What made you think you could talk to me crazy?! I'm the man in the relationship! You better remember that from now on! You hear me?!

She doesn't respond or move.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Mo, get up! I'm hungry, and you need to get up and cook!

She still doesn't respond.

He makes his way down the stairs.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Mo, if I have to tell you one more time.

He sees the blood leaking through her pants as she moans in pain.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

My baby.

He runs off stage.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 2

Monica is on the hospital bed exhausted, wearing a hospital gown while Deena stands beside her bed wearing something casual.

DEENA

What happened?

MONICA

I don't wanna talk about it.

DEENA

You don't wanna talk about it? You just lost your baby, and you don't wanna talk about it?

MONICA

We got into it.

DEENA

And he had to put his hands on you?

MONICA

Who said he put his hands on me? I said we got into it.

DEENA

Let me guess. You tripped over your feet and fell down the steps?

MONICA

That's exactly what happened.

DEENA

Are you comfortable with that lie?

MONICA

Of course I'm comfortable, because it's not a lie.

DEENA

Does he still go to that bar you told me about?

MONICA

Yeah.

Craig walks in wearing the same outfit.

DEENA

Mo---

CRAIG

How's she doing?

Deena turns her head looking at him sucking her teeth.

DEENA

I'll see you when you get back to work. All of a sudden I feel sick.

Deena walks off stage.

Craig walks over to Monica trying to hold her hand, and she snatches away.

CRAIG

I know what you're thinking. There's nothing I can say that will justify my actions.

MONICA

You damn right, there's nothing you can say. I lost our first child because you relapsed on helping the woman you claim to love.

CRAIG

That's my fault. I was watching the game---

MONICA

And you decided to take it out on me for a decision you made?

CRAIG

I know sorry won't cut it.

MONICA

Do you understand my child is gone? Why would I want anything to do with you?

CRAIG

Because you still love me like I love you.

MONICA

If that was true, I would still be pregnant.

He gets down on his knee grabbing her hand.

CRAIG

I know you want nothing to do with me. And I know no matter how much I apologize, it won't change the situation. But I swear on my life, I'll never do this again.

MONICA

The man I love would've never done this.

CRAIG

I am the man you love.

She begins crying.

MONICA

I can't believe you.

CRAIG

All I'm asking is for one more chance.

MONICA

Craig---

CRAIG

Just say yes. I'm begging you. Say you'll stay.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 3

Months go by, and at first, Craig was back to the man Monica knew and loved. ...It didn't last long.

Monica is standing over the stove wearing something casual humming a tune, cooking dinner.

Craig staggers in drunk wearing his construction uniform holding a bottle, making his way to the table taking a seat.

CRAIG

What's cooking?

She turns around walking over to him with a smile.

MONICA

Roast. Macaroni, green beans---

CRAIG

Okay, whatever. When will the food be ready?

She clears her throat.

MONICA

It'll be ready in a matter of minutes. I'm waiting for the roast to get done.

He shakes his head disappointed, taking a swig from the bottle.

CRAIG

You've been here all day, but dinner not ready?! What the hell were you doing?!

She takes a step back nervous.

MONICA

I had to clean the house, and then I started on dinner.

He takes a swig, and then slings the bottle across the room.

CRAIG

You know after a long day, I want my meal hot and ready! I don't wanna hear excuses!

MONICA

Craig---

CRAIG

Craig what?! Craig what?! That's not putting a meal in front of me!

He gets up grabbing her by the wrist, causing her to shriek in fear.

CRAIG

You were with another man?!

MONICA

Craig I swear...

He slaps her across the face.

CRAIG

Shut up! I smell another man on you! You wanna be with another man?! I'll make sure he wants the lights off!

She screams as he slaps her a few times, before throwing her into the wall.

She continues crying with her hands over her face.

He takes his belt off, wrapping it around his knuckles.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 4

Monica is sitting at her cubicle wearing a two-piece business suit with her head low typing on the keyboard. She pauses making sure her hair is covering the bruise on the right side of her eye.

Deena walks in wearing something casual, walking over to Monica placing a hand on her shoulder.

Monica jerks in fear, slowly turning around.

DEENA

Are you okay?

Monica laughs nervously, making sure the bruise on her face doesn't get revealed.

MONICA

I'm fine. I didn't get a lot of sleep last night. You know how it is when the husband can't get enough of what you got?

Deena moves Monica's hair to the side.

DEENA

When does the wife get enough of her husband beating her?

Monica moves Deena's hand.

Deena walks over to an empty cubicle grabbing a chair placing it beside Monica taking a seat.

MONICA

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

DEENA

Girl, everybody knows. Nobody in here is blind. He's no longer the loving high school sweetheart you fell in love with.

MONICA

He...he's under a lot of stress. I'm the woman of the house, so I should uphold my job, far as keeping the house clean and having dinner ready on time. I lack in those areas from time to time, so we have our altercations.

DEENA

Mo, you can't honestly sit here making yourself believe what just came from your mouth.

MONICA

It's the truth. I don't do my part.

DEENA

So, a beating justifies it?

Monica doesn't respond.

DEENA (CONT'D)

I can relate to your situation.

MONICA

What do you know about my situation?

Deena pulls the neck part of her shirt down, just enough to see the scar on her chest from being stabbed.

Monica covers her mouth.

MONICA

What happened?

DEENA

I was like you. Thinking it was love, and nothing else in the world mattered. Thank God I survived. I told myself, there's no love in the world worth me losing my life. When are you going to realize that?

Monica shakes her head in denial.

MONICA

It'll never go that far with us.

DEENA

That's the same thing I said. I kept saying this can't be the man I love doing this.

MONICA

We love each other.

DEENA

He loves knowing his grip is so tight, you'll never leave. Can you honestly tell me why you love him?

Monica doesn't respond, shaking her head.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Don't let what happened to me or worse happen to you. You're a very beautiful intelligent woman. There's a man who'll actually love you, without putting a bruise on your face to express it.

Deena walks off stage.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 5

Monica is sitting on the sofa wearing the same outfit looking at old pictures of her and Craig, wiping the tears from her face.

Craig staggers in drunk wearing a basketball jersey and shorts, holding a bouquet of roses.

He leans up against the door.

CRAIG

Baby, I'm home.

She sniffles wiping her eyes, placing the picture down.

MONICA

Hey.

CRAIG

I know I was out of line last night, and there's nothing I can do or say to make you forgive me. But I have something explaining I'll never do you wrong again.

She turns her head looking at him, pointing to the bruise.

MONICA

You think roses can heal this bruise because you thought I was with another man? Do you think roses can heal the inner scarred tissue you embedded in me, due to lack of trust?

She lowers her head.

He walks over to her kneeling down, placing the roses next to her.

CRAIG

I understand what you're saying.

MONICA

What happened to the man I love? The man I gave my heart, never thinking twice about taking it back.

CRAIG

It's my fault you lost him. I lost myself somewhere, and by doing that, I also lost my real true love. That's why I have this.

He pulls out a ring box opening it, revealing a diamond ring.

She covers her mouth shocked.

MONICA

Oh, my God.

CRAIG

This day marks our anniversary.

MONICA

Craig...

He places a finger to her lips.

CRAIG

Don't say anything. Just know from here on, I'll never hurt you again.

Tears fall from her eyes, hugging and kissing all over his face...and then the look of joy turns into a frown.

MONICA

What's that smell?

CRAIG

What smell?

She pushes him back.

MONICA

Unless you're searching for your inner woman, which I highly doubt. Why are you wearing perfume?!

He clears his throat.

CRAIG

Baby, I don't know what you're talking about.

MONICA

Right! So all these scratches on your neck, along with this big ass passion mark mean what?!

She picks up the roses hitting him over the head, before standing up walking away.

He stands up with an exposed look.

CRAIG

Baby, let me explain. I was with the fella's playing ball and got all scratched up from defense. The bruise is from getting bowed in the neck. I wanted to fight him, but I decided to let it go.

She stops, turning around looking at him.

MONICA

You're so full of it! Why can't you be a man for once, and fess up to what you did?!

His look turns serious.

CRAIG

Is that what you wanna hear?

MONICA

It's not about what I wanna hear. It's about telling me the truth.

CRAIG

Okay. I was with another woman tonight. Actually, I've been with a different woman for the past few months. You won't do anything about it, because you know better. Get that ass up them stairs, and get in bed.

MONICA

You're a worthless excuse of a man. You know what? As much as this is about to hurt me, because I wish it didn't happen. I'm glad you knocked me down the stairs so I could lose our child. It would've ate me up inside, watching our child see his father turnout to be a worthless duplicate of his father!

He charges at her, and she kicks him between the legs, making him drop to the floor in pain.

MONICA (CONT'D)

You're so predictable. I'll be back to collect my things, but my heart you can keep. Let it remind you of a good thing you ruined, because you weren't built to handle it.

She makes her way off stage.

CRAIG

Monica! Monica, get back here! I'm killing you! I swear to God, I'm killing you!

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

SCENE 6

Monica and Gwen are sitting on the sofa talking.

Monica is wiping the tears from her eyes.

MONICA

I can't believe this.

GWEN

I tried to tell you it was something about him.

MONICA

Mama, it's not time for that.

Gwen turns looking at her.

GWEN

How many times do you have to get smacked in the face before you realize the truth? Do you enjoy getting smacked in the face with everything, but the truth?

MONICA

How can you say that at a time like this?

GWEN

The same way you took those beatings. The same way you lost your child. Baby, I love you to death. How can you not listen to a person that's been around the world more than once?

MONICA

You know that old saying, "Love is blind"? I'm a product of that.

Gwen laughs.

GWEN

That's not what you're a product of. You're a product of stupidity.

MONICA

Mama, come on.

GWEN

You're a tad bit on the stupid side. You loved he was the prince charming to the rescue. The good looks and I guess sex. How was the sex? I heard those tall boys---

MONICA

Mama, please.

Gwen laughs.

GWEN

I'm sorry. But what you thought was love back then was nothing more than spur of the moment. You told me to let you handle it on your own, and I did. Do you remember what I told you my mother told me?

MONICA

You told me a lot of things she said.

GWEN

A real man never puts his hands on a woman. A real man loves his woman for more than just an object. He loves her for being the woman she is.

Monica sighs, shaking her head.

MONICA

What do I do now?

GWEN

Are you happy you got out of there with your life?

MONICA

Yes.

GWEN

That's all that matters. Everything else from here on out is your new beginning.

MONICA

Thanks.

GWEN

No need to thank me. I should've stepped in sooner before it went this far.

MONICA

There's no one to blame but myself. He said the signs when he told me about his parents. I just didn't expect him to go through the same phase. Hell. We're reliving his parent's relationship.

GWEN

You don't feel like I let you down?

MONICA

Mama, I let myself down. I remember when I asked him why his mother couldn't move on, and he said because his father was her first. Look what's happening to me.

GWEN

I feel I should've done something.

MONICA

Being here for me now is the best thing you can do for me.

GWEN

I love you, baby.

MONICA

I love you, too. You don't mind if your baby stays here for a few days?

GWEN

No matter how old you get. This will always be your home.

They give each other a hug.

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 7

Craig is on the sofa appearing sleep, with a liquor bottle resting on the table.

Monica comes in trying to creep towards the stairs.

She gets to the steps, and he sits up grabbing the bottle from the table, taking a sip.

CRAIG

About time you came home.

She turns around looking at him.

MONICA

This is not my home. That feeling left a long time ago. I was naive not handing over the key.

He takes another sip, standing up.

CRAIG

This is your home! Now, like I told you earlier! Get up those stairs! Get in the bed, and take what I have to give you!

MONICA

At one point I loved you, and didn't wanna lose you. My eyes are open now, realizing it was neither of those reasons. I was afraid to not love you, for what you might do to me. I didn't wanna leave because I knew you would torment me until I came back. Here's something I know you're not expecting to hear. I'm no longer your recyclable object. I'm about to get my few things, starting a new life. Without you!

CRAIG

You think it's that easy?! You think you can come in here all high and mighty without repercussions?!

MONICA

There's nothing you can do or say that will knock me down.

CRAIG

If I come over there and go upside your head you'd get knocked down.

MONICA

You do what you need to do.

She starts to walk up the stairs, and he runs over grabbing her.

She turns around pushing him back, followed with a slap across the face.

MONICA

Don't you ever put your hands on me! I'll be damn if I continue being your punching bag! You put another finger on me, and one of us has to go!

A sinister smile spreads across his face.

CRAIG

One of us has to go?

MONICA

That's what I...

He hits her with enough force to make her break her neck on the rail, falling to the floor dead.

CRAIG

Get up! I've done worse than this!

He kicks her a few times.

CRAIG (CONT'D)

Monica?

Deena is knocking on the door.

DEENA

(Off stage)

Mo, are you in there?

Craig looks around in fear, before running off stage.

Deena comes in wearing something casual, seeing Monica's dead body running over to her.

DEENA

I told you!

END OF THE SCENE

ACT II

Scene 8

Some jazz music is playing in the partially crowded bar. Craig is sitting at the bar taking shots. With each shot he shakes his head in sorrow.

CRAIG

I can't believe I did that.

Deena walks in, walking up behind Craig.

DEENA

You're a worthless bastard.

CRAIG

Who is that?

DEENA

Don't even look at me until I say so.

She pulls a gun out cocking it.

Everybody in the bar screams, dropping to the floor.

He tries turning around, and she presses the gun harder against his head.

DEENA (CONT'D)

Didn't I tell you don't look at me until I say so?

CRAIG

What do you want?

DEENA

I want you to see what it feels like being helpless. If I had the time, I would beat the hell out of you. But for now, savor these last few moments of whatever this is you called a life.

CRAIG

Listen. I didn't mean---

DEENA

You meant it. You meant every bruise you put on her. Every ounce of her dignity you took, leading to your complete wish, taking her life.

CRAIG

I didn't mean to kill her. She said something hurting my pride.

DEENA

Pride?! You have the audacity to say you have pride?! What kind of man beats on a woman, and says he has pride?!

CRAIG

I honestly can't tell you.

DEENA

I know what to tell you. Turn around and look at me. These eyes filled with hate will be the last thing you see.

He turns around with tears pouring down his face, staring into the barrel of the gun.

CRAIG

I guess I deserve this.

DEENA

You deserve a beating! You deserve a destroyed ego, with the scars to go with it! That's what you deserve!

CRAIG

Can I say one more thing?

DEENA

What?

CRAIG

I really did...

She fires a round, and he falls over dead.

Everyone screams.

She takes his seat, picking up one of his shots tilting it back.

END OF THE SCENE

END OF ACT II

THE END