

W♂man of the Cl♂th

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Over DARKNESS, the sound of CHAOS, doors slamming --

INT. MEDICAL BUILDING - OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOCK on the desk reads: 11:30

Dark. Only light comes from a flashlight being held by a MASKED SOMEONE (MS) (gender is unknown) wearing all black.

Masked Someone appears to have ransacked the office...
But then, MS goes to a very specific location -- whatever this person is looking for, they know where it is.

EXT. MEDICAL BUILDING - SAME

A BMW pulls into the lot.

A PREPPY MALE darts out, coffee in hand - too late to be this chipper. Ready to work, he unlocks the office door, steps in, alarm beeps -- tags in the password.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - SAME

Every drawer in the file cabinet is open.
Masked Someone beams the flashlight onto a file.
Sees a name -- JIZELLE RODGERS.
Masked Someone takes the files --
Preppy Male enters at the same time --

...They stare at each other. Showdown. Both afraid...

Or so it seems... Preppy Male puts his head down like he's seen nothing.

Masked Someone runs out...

Preppy Male sits behind his desk. Exhales.

-- We hear a car speed off! --

Preppy Male dials 911.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
911, what's your emergency?

PREPPY MALE
(frantic)
Please help! I've been robbed!

INT. BMW - MOMENTS LATER

Masked Someone, SPEEDING AWAY. Takes off her mask.

We get a VERY QUICK glimpse of her profile, but not long enough to remember any features because instantly a deer bolts by -- her car swerves -- misses the deer -- collides into a tree and rolls into a DITCH --

CUT TO:

SUPER: ONE WEEK EARLIER

DARKNESS. Groans... grunting... labored breathing...the sounds become clearer -- more passionate...
We're under sheets...

A man lets out a loud GRUNT -- orgasms. His chest vibrating from the after effects.

This is LEVI RODGERS (50's). A slick oil type of fella'. Handsome. A calculated asshole.

The sexiest female body we've ever seen emerges from under the sheets and struts into the

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

This is JIZELLE RODGERS (late 30's). She's every man's type. If she were in sweatpants and a helmet she'd still be the sexiest woman in the room.

Jizelle spits his cum into the toilet.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Every twenty-eight days, this is my routine. Thought I'd be free by now. Key word is 'thought'. But wise folks understand 'thought' is birthed from ignorance.

Jizelle brushes her teeth.

Through the medicine cabinet mirror we see the vastness of this bathroom: a shower with a bench, a hot tub, a bidet -- there's money in this family.

Jizelle locks the door. She reaches under the sink towards the back, into a secret compartment... she pulls out a syringe filled with blood.

She ejects the blood into the maxi-pad, wraps it in the plastic and trashes it.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

AVERY (9, blind), KRISHNA (19, looks and acts older than her age), and ZARA (16, thinks she knows it all) are seated at the table.

Jizelle sets the plates in front of each person.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Here's my kin: Avery, he's my own flesh. There's Krishna; the eldest sibling. A hard sell for nineteen, but she could pass for thirty with those outdated threads. Zara, the youngest lady in the house, she's a handful'a mouth. Sneaky, good heart but a cunt of a child.

Levi takes a seat at the head.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

And this high cotton fella' is my Levi.

She sets his plate in front of him.
Jizelle gives him a flirtatious eye.
She takes her seat at the opposite end.

LEVI

(to Avery)

Say grace.

Everyone grabs hands. Zara rolls her eyes.

AVERY

Jesuses heavenly Father, thank you for this food, and for money to buy food and make it nutrition to our bodies. Ahmen.

ALL

Amen.

KRISHNA

Great prayer, Avery. Looks scrumptious, Jizelle.

Jizelle acknowledges the compliment with a smile.

Everyone eats at a normal pace except Avery, he eats slower, more concentrated.

JIZELLE
So how's school?
(V.O.)
Three...

Jizelle looks at Levi, trying to subtly get his attention. She's uneasy about something and wants him to intervene but he doesn't notice her. *

KRISHNA
All's swell. We're going much deeper this semester - the holocaust and how it was prophes-- *

ZARA
It's not a real school. All it is is church stuff. *

JIZELLE (V.O.)
...Two.

KRISHNA
No, actually Zara, academics are involved.
(to Levi)
We once had the most gifted mathematicians in the world.

LEVI
I expect you to get more than just education. *

KRISHNA
I know daddy.

LEVI
I'm priming you for greatness, Krishna. *

Krishna nods: understood. Jizelle exhales.

JIZELLE (V.O.)
ONE. Here we go--

ZARA
(to Krishna)
This doesn't bother you?

KRISHNA
(lost)
I'm sorry?

JIZELLE
--Girls, how about we--

ZARA

Women are continually being groomed
by trash ass...

*

AVERY

Ouuuu.

ZARA (CONT'D)

...men to be what they want us to
be.

(to Levi)

What if she doesn't want to be a
minister? Does she have a choice?

LEVI

When the Lord calls you, no.

ZARA

--Bullshit. Everyone in *your* Bible
had a choice.

JIZELLE

--Your mouth!

Zara rolls her eyes.

LEVI

--Repent for that!

ZARA

Ask the *dead* man in the sky--

AVERY

(Jesus not dead, Zara.)

ZARA (CONT'D)

(over)

--To forgive everything I've done
wrong, although he "*supposedly*"
knows everything I will do; think
about doing, not to mention all the
'*accidental on purpose*' shit I plan
on doing. Oh, and if I've "*humbly*"
asked once, why I gotta ask again?
Did He forget? Can't I just say,
"hey, forgive me forever, so we
don't have to discuss this again?"
Or how about-- if it's simpler for
Him-- He forgives what He knows I'm
sorry for and work with me on the
rest?

(re: Avery's comment)

Oh, and Avery, he'd have to
actually be born to die.

AVERY

Mommy...

KRISHNA

(meek)

It's called faith. The substance of things hoped for and--

ZARA

--The blah blah blah not seen. Right. But let's be honest--

JIZELLE

--Aright STOP.

ZARA

ALMOST DONE--

LEVI

(slams his hand on the table)

DAMMIT THAT'S ENOUGH!

SILENCE. Levi has spoken... A BEAT... Then softly...

KRISHNA

Daddy's job's to lead us to our purpose. Serving God and his people is *all I've dreamed of doing.*

ZARA

(in disbelief)

And you *really don't see a problem with that?*

LEVI

(threatening)

Another word and your grounded. EAT.

ZARA

(Pushes away from table)

SHIT, I forgot I was fasting.

Zara goes upstairs. No one protests.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

Jizelle loads the dishwasher. Annoyed. She opens the fridge, reaches deep in the back and pulls out a container of prune juice.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Levi always said I didn't have to love his children like my own, just treat 'em like such.

*

Jizelle pours a half glass of something brown. Not nearly as thick as Prune Juice. It's scotch. She downs it, straight.

She twists the top on tight and slides it to the rear.

INT. LEVI'S CHURCH - DAY

A nice sized congregation - 500 or so members. Every pew is full. This is a traditional crowd. Won't find a woman in pants.

Levi does what he does best, manipulate people - some call it preaching.

"Amens", "Preach", "Yes Lord" -- coming from the congregation.

Jizelle, dressed like a much older first lady, hat, dress to the knees, fans herself and cheers her husband on.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Thirty-eight years old, seven years of marriage, and still living a lie.

(out loud)

Preach, Pastor!

She stands, waves her hands in the air to the Lord. Routine is down packed.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

I hate how determined he is sometimes. It clashes with my stubbornness. Despite that, me and Levi have a great marriage and we really like each other. This man saved my life.

We fade into a **flashback:**

A slightly younger Jizelle is crying. She holds a baby (Avery). We're still in the same church and Levi is on the same pulpit preaching...

*

JIZELLE (V.O.)

I'd been running like hell when conviction set in. It was through Levi that I met the love of my life: Jesus.

RESUME SCENE

The organist plays a welcoming hymn. People are standing.
A couple with two small children walk to the alter.

LEVI
(to couple)
Amen, Brother. Amen.
(to congregation)
You see this? This is the word
manifested: men leading their
families to salvation. HALLELUJAH!

The church rejoices along with him.

INT. LEVI'S CHURCH - STUDY - LATER

Jizelle assists her sweaty husband as he puts on a dry shirt.

LEVI
(agitated)
...Eleven-thousand dollars! I
preach my soul out; visit their
sick asses in the hospital, pray
for favor over their lives and for
what?! WHAT AM I PRAYING FOR?!
They barely give shit--

JIZELLE
(calm)
Just focus on God's word, serving
his people, He'll complete the
rest.

In the corner is Levi's armor bearer, EMORY SIMMS (41, large,
pot belly, good looking but his eyes are glossy...)

EMORY
(careful)
Excuse me, Pastor, Sir we may need
to go. *
(taps his watch)
...{Plane} boarding in exactly
three thousand six hundred
seconds... *

Emory talks *different*. Levi exhales LOUDLY.

LEVI
They don't appreciate the
importance of what I'm-- we're-- *
'us' as a ministry is trying to do. *
We need renovations.
(MORE)

LEVI (CONT'D)

Folks are dying, when they step in here they need to see LIFE. But the shit cost money.

JIZELLE

In the Lord's timing.

Levi's face shows he could give two shits about the Lord's timing. He wants it now!

LEVI

(to Emory, re: sermon)

Where are we with the message? *

JIZELLE

Done. It's exceptional. *

She looks to Emory, acknowledging his role in the situation.

EMORY

Wondrous, pastor, sir. *

LEVI

(re: sermon)

'Wrath' or a 'feel good'? *

EMORY

Prepared both, pastor, sir.. *

LEVI

How much love they bestow at our last fellowship? *

JIZELLE

(I can check)--

EMORY

(over, spit-fire fast)

Nine-thousand four hundred and eighty-six dollars of which you gave me eighty, first-lady and you had dinner that came to two-hundred and eight-one dollars, a full tank of gas that was forty-nine eight six but you told the attendant to make it even but he stopped at fifty dollars and seven cent for a grand net total of nine-thousand seventy four dollars and ninety three cents, Pastor, Sir. *

He has a form of autism. He beams with pride. Eyes blinking very fast. *

Levi jolts like he's about to break into a praise dance. *
(It's like his knees gave out for a quick second - something church people do when they get good news).

This is why Levi keeps Emory around. Jizelle feels 'a way'.
She's used to being his "go to" for everything.

LEVI
Captured my cadence?

JIZELLE
(smiling with contempt)
Emory knows your voice better than
me.

EMORY *
Thank you sister, first-lady, *
ma'am. *

Emory beams. Not sensing the backhanded comment.
Levi gives Emory a pat on the back: good job. *
... Puts on his blazer. Kisses his wife as he leaves. *

INT. ZARA'S BEDROOM

Spacious and junky. In the midst of this filth we find Zara
on a beanbag, resting on her back. On the floor beside her:
Swiss rolls, soda cans and a rolled up dollar bill with white
powder residue.

She sifts through a playboy magazine.

Zara gets a facetime call. She wipes her runny nose, hides
the playboy and answers.
The caller: GOODY (18), a soft-spoken and handsome teenager
that's all about Jesus. *Imagine Joel Olsteen as a child.*

ZARA
Hey, babes.

GOODY
Hi, my love. Howww ya' feeeelin'?

ZARA
You're too cute. I'm swell. Just
studying.

GOODY
Awesome sauce.

Off his look Zara rolls her eyes.

ZARA

And you?

GOODY

Overjoyed with an abundance of love.

Off his look Zara grimaces.

ZARA

So tell me, how'd it go?

GOODY

(excited, pauses)

Babes, they loved me! Part of me thinks I got it. Just don't want to jinx it, ya know?

ZARA

Goody you're an awesome speaker.

*

GOODY

But everyones good here; like super good.

*

*

*

*

ZARA

And I'm usually right. Right? It's yours.

*

*

*

He agrees with a smile.

GOODY

Life would be impossible without you. Give what I say any thought?

*

*

*

ZARA

I've been so caught up in the Word ... Just one thing at a time.

GOODY

Not getting any younger.

ZARA

Okay, was literally seeking God for answers when you called.

*

GOODY

That's what I like to hear.

An alarm in his background goes off.

GOODY

Uh-oh, you ready? It's time.

ZARA

Yes, I'm famished!

He closes his eyes.

GOODY

God's going to reward your sacrifice, babes.

(goes into a prayer)

O' Lord-God, our King and Ancient of Days. Yeshua. Elohim. Jehovah-Raffia. I thank you for answering our prayers, O' king of Kings. We Ask that your will be done in our lives and I hope you speak to Zara in the same ways you spoke to me. Tell her the same words, O'Lord-God. Help her see that this fast is not in vain, but that she will be my wife. O' Yeshua you said we will have the desires of our hearts, O'Lord-god and you know my flesh is weak and I need a wife to complete this journey with. I thank you for preparing her to be the wife I need O'lord-God.

Zara gives him 'the finger' and mouths 'fuck you'.

GOODY (CONT'D)

In your awesome child's name: Yashua. The King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(opens eyes)

I love you my love.

They exchange smiles then disconnect.

She grabs her pack of opened cookies, that she was already munching on, and goes back to the playboy.

INT. GREATER TABERNACLE - DAY

Shuffling down the prodigious staircase is the charismatic BISHOP JEAN SAUNDERS (61). He's smooth, cunning, and all business. Levi hustles behind him.

Bishop opens the sanctuary doors. It's like the gates of heaven just opened:

SANCTUARY - CONTINUOUS

One word: OPULENCE.

Thick purple carpet. A balcony on top of a balcony; thousands of seats; a stain-glassed image of Jesus adorns the windows over the pulpit.

The plush carpet almost swallows their feet whole.

BISHOP SAUNDERS
(re: carpet)
Plush as hell.

Levi gazes in amazement at TVs hanging from the walls, a gold plated podium with Swarovski crystals imbedded down the side; today, it's encased in thick plastic

BISHOP SAUNDERS
(boastful)
A million-plus views every Sunday. *
Can't keep enough merch, ROI's *
through the roof. Bible study, noon *
day prayer- both standing room *
only. People across the world, *
waiting with bated breath for the *
man of God. I won't rub in my what *
I earn outside these walls.

Levi takes it all in. Bishop smells blood.

BISHOP SAUNDERS
(re: stage)
Go head. Go up and get a feel.

INT. RESTAURANT - PRIVATE ROOM

Levi and Bishop feast: lobsters, shrimp, dark liquor; cigars rest in their ash trays.

Emory stands watch at the door.

Levi's leaned in, hanging on his every word.

BISHOP SAUNDERS
God's business is the most serious *
business, Levi. It don't get more *
important. *
(chewing) *
Excuse me...a lot more exposure on *
this level. *

He raises his pointer finger in the air... *

BISHOP SAUNDERS

You heard that? Dassa double entendre.

(sucks meat out his teeth)

More publicity: more eyes. More eyes: more fingers. Plain enough?

(Levi nods)

It's much bigger than you.

*
*
*
*

Bishop puts his hand on Levi's shoulder.

...Pleading without *pleading*...

He knows what can come if Levi's holding back info.

BISHOP SAUNDERS

Any skeletons I should know about?

LEVI

No. None, sir.

Bishop stares at him. He answered too fast. BEAT.

LEVI

Not a bone.

BISHOP SAUNDERS

I'm not one for chiseling things out a person. 'Specially men. Now although I'm Jean I'll be frank: We like you Levi. You've shown the effort, committed, but your image needs refining. Our people won't follow a asshole. We're still old school in a lot of ways.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*
*

LEVI

Whatever it takes.

*
*

BISHOP SAUNDERS

Could Smile more, speak first. Cut the alpha shit. Maybe whiten your fronts, move em in some.

*
*
*
*

Levi nods and licks his tongue across his teeth.

*

BISHOP SAUNDERS

Your wife. Lovely lady, keep thou close. She gives you "Ummfff".

(Levi nods)

More pictures of family. Social media; conferences - let the public see both of you's. The blind child--

*
*
*
*
*

LEVI
Avery.

BISHOP SAUNDERS
Center a healing service
around him. I got a few
Doctors to play ball. Your
wife, get her pregnant by
years end and I'll market you *
as Ruth and Boaz.

LEVI
Pregnant.

A long pause.

BISHOP SAUNDERS
I assume you have relations, no? *

LEVI
(lying)
That won't be a problem--

BISHOP SAUNDERS
Oh, and the blind child -- Amos, he *
needs your last name. A blended
home won't sell it.

Levi takes this in. Understood.

BISHOP SAUNDERS (CONT'D) *

Won't be hard to sell her as a
former lady of the night. Think *
she'll mind?
(doesn't care)
It'll give hope to every whore and *
harlot across the world. Harlot's a *
word we used back in my day. I can
see the book now:
(pause)
'*Hope for hoes: a whores guide down
the aisle.*'

Bishop winks. Playfully slaps his hand on Levi's face and *
pinches his cheek.. *

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE - NIGHT

A puff of smoke blows in the air.

On a big couch, Jizelle has an e-cigarette in one hand and
a brownie in the other. Eyes closed. High as an astronaut.

On another couch, LEYDA COLE (37, therapist, attractive). She lays on the couch also, but her head's at the opposite end. A real blunt is in her hand. She smokes with such femininity.

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Yes, I love the Lord but I have vices. I like to get high. Technically smoking is the sin. So with Avery's bear nose, I find myself eating my way to bliss.
(Bites; out loud:)
God, this is good.

Jizelle offers some to Leyda.

LEYDA

Had three. Luckily my patient babbles the entire hour and just needs the occasional "and why do you feel that way?"
(they laugh)
Ahhh. I can't wait till I can give this up, retire and go live on a beach...

JIZELLE

Then who'll hear all my problems?

LEYDA

Edibles. Sunlight. Good weather.
Theres enough sand for us both.

*
*

Jizelle smiles half-heartedly.

Leyda crosses towards Jizelle. Innocent seduction, but filled with pretense. She stops at her desk. There's a picture of her and her two sons.

JIZELLE

(deflecting)
How are they?

LEYDA

They're teenage boys: horny and sneaky. I want you to meet them.

JIZELLE

I stay away from horny, sneaky males. It's why I married older.

They laugh. Leyda caresses the side of Jizelle's face. Jizelle pulls away.

LEYDA
You should stay away from all men.

JIZELLE
Leyda, That road is closed. *

LEYDA
Just wanna do a teensy more
construction. *

JIZELLE
You're obstructing my high. *

Leyda leans in for a kiss. Jizelle pushes her away and gets up to leave.

JIZELLE
Why can't you just be my friend; be here for me like I'VE BEEN THE ENTIRE TIME FOR YOU.
(angry)
--Just forget it; don't know why I expected you to have matured--

LEYDA
You serious? You know this 'victim act' is growing mold. *

JIZELLE
Leyda. *

LEYDA
You're a mind fuck. *

Leyda lifts her shirt and reveals a deep scar on the side of her abdomen. *

LEYDA
A chemically imbalanced, devious mind fuck!

Leyda leaves. *

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jizelle relaxes in her bed. Pajamas on. She sips from a mug. Avery walks in. Hops in bed.

JIZELLE
Something wrong with your room?

AVERY
Too dark.

They share a laugh. *

AVERY

(sniffs)

Why do you wear that perfume to sleep? *

JIZELLE

(whispers)

Keep a secret? Too tired to shower. *

AVERY

MOM.

She smells her pits. *

JIZELLE

I'm not too bad, right? *

AVERY

Borderline. *

She rolls her eyes: *

AVERY

I heard that. Your lashes. It's still better than the one you put on when I was a kid. *

JIZELLE

{You gave me} Some credit; I'll take it. *

AVERY

--Does God hate gays? *

Jizelle's taken aback. Gathers herself. Clears her throat. *

JIZELLE

No. *

AVERY

Are you sure? *

JIZELLE

Avery, there's a lot of false information and ignorance floating around-- *

AVERY

But he hates sin, right?

JIZELLE

Well, yes, he-- *

AVERY

So then...?

*

She can see he's not fully understanding.

JIZELLE

You like cookies, right?

(he nods)

So we're the cookie and sin, sin is chocolate chips. So the sin -- or chocolate chips -- is what God wants to cleanse us of. And that's all sin: lying, cheating, doing married people stuff when you're not married.

*

AVERY

What do married people do?

JIZELLE

Make babies.

AVERY

But I was at your wedding so am I sin?

*

JIZELLE

Of course not.

AVERY

But being gay is a sin?

JIZELLE

In certain biblical translations--
But God is loving and even more
open minded than we credit Him.

*

*

*

(uncomfortable pause)

Are you...?

AVERY

(shrugs)

Maybe.

(beat)

I don't know what boys or girls
look like.

The innocent sarcasm makes her smile.

JIZELLE

I'd love you no matter what.

AVERY

Will I ever meet my real dad?

JIZELLE

You were barely off the breast when
you did.

*
*

Avery makes a grossed out face.

AVERY

What did he look like?

QUICK CUT (flashback)

a young handsome, metrosexual man -- this is Avery's dad. He has short well maintained hair, and he seems up to date with the latest fashions.

He rubs a pregnant woman's (whose face we don't see) stomach.

RESUME SCENE

JIZELLE

Splitting image of you.

AVERY

I can only imagine what I look
like?

JIZELLE

Very handsome. You've got his smile
and chin.

AVERY

Everyone tells me I have your
smile.

Jizelle gazes at him with love and sorrow in her eyes.
Shakes her head: no. But he can't see that.

She wraps him in her arms before he can speak again.

INT. COLLEGE DORM - NIGHT

Krishna irons a pair of pants. She hums 'Amazing Grace'.
The TV plays a game show. Her cell rings.

KRISHNA

Mrs. B!

INTERCUT - BIANCA'S apartment.

Dingy and outdated. Bianca, on her couch, magazines spread on
her lap, soaking her feet.

Bianca's not fat, but she has a gut. Her 'too small' shirt
tells us she's still in denial about her size.

BIANCA

The lies on Facebook, you really mean them? -- And don't say you don't have a Facebook. I saw it.

KRISHNA

Now's not a good time.

BIANCA

Respect my name, and what I've done for you.

KRISHNA

(sarcastic)

You birthed me; nothing more.

BIANCA

One day you'll choke on your bitterness.

KRISHNA

I need to go.

BIANCA

I don't know what your father and that whore beat you over the head with now but you need to come back to earth.

KRISHNA

Excuse me? Explicit language isn't-

BIANCA

-- This whole act's turning-- you're like a chick-fil-a robot.

KRISHNA

You gave us up so excuse me if I don't want to indulge in long conversations about my personal life. I have no relationship with you. I never had one. You chose drugs over your eight children. So you have to live with your bad decisions. Only good decision you made was choosing a great man, my father, to have me with. You have a (blessed day, okay).

*
*
*

BIANCA

(over)

UGH! Predictable response! Be human, Krishna. We weren't made to be perfect.

KRISHNA
 (sarcasm)
 Less like Jesus; more like you.

BIANCA
 I actually exist.

KRISHNA
 Have a great d--

BIANCA
 If you really believe in that book
 then you know who the real devil is-

BIANCA (CONT'D)
 --It's not me, it's your
 father--

KRISHNA
 (over, repeatedly)
 Stop. STOP!

BIANCA (CONT'D)
 YOU LIVED WITH THE MONSTER. YOU
 KNOW!

KRISHNA
 He's no monster!

BIANCA
 I fought for you and you
 helped put me away!--

Finally, Krishna's anger peaks! She screams into the phone:

KRISHNA
 I rebuke you in Christ name! I
 REBUKE YOU!

Krishna hangs up. Bianca chuckles.

BIANCA
 Brainwashed cunt.

Krishna opens her laptop, it's on Facebook. She goes to her
 friends list and deletes: Jessica Mckinny.

INT. DARNELL'S CAR - NIGHT

Krishna's in the passenger seat. DARNELL JEFFRIES (30's,
 pudgy, short, glasses, big gap) is behind the wheel.
 Darnell's dressed pretty shabby.

They're parked in a dark part of this lot.

DARNELL
 Honestly, I feel like you did this
 on purpose.

KRISHNA
Me? By myself, with no help from
you?

He reaches for her hand but she pulls it back.

DARNELL
I'm not mad at you.
(beat)
You need me right now. You don't
know what you're doing.

KRISHNA
I'll figure it out.

DARNELL
With who?

KRISHNA
Me and God.

Darnell lets out a deep laugh.

DARNELL
You think he's listening to you?
Especially now?

That hit her hard. She puts her head down. Shamed.

DARNELL
I don't mean it that way, but these
things happen for the better. Let's
take a ride.

Darnell starts his car, hand on the steering wheel revealing
his gold wedding band.

DARNELL
Seat back.

Krishna reclines her seat all the way back. He turns the
headlights on...

...As he drives we see he's on her COLLEGE CAMPUS.

Darnell stops a few feet before the security gate.
A GUARD's in the booth. Darnell grabs a blanket from the
backseat and tosses it over Krishna -- hiding her.

The security divider raises up as he accelerates through...

GUARD
Goodnight, Professor Jeffries.

EXT. REHAB CLINIC - DAY

Walking through the door is MERCURY FIELDS (40), an ex-crackhead that hasn't shaken the look. She doesn't have many teeth, hair's dirty, fingernails look like black crayons. She gets in the

OLDSMOBILE - CONTINUOUS

BARNEY (62), an old man that looks even older than he is, tongue kisses Mercury.

BARNEY

Sure as hell look sad for a free woman.

Mercury just sulks.

MERCURY

You smell like Budweiser.

BARNEY

I drank before I swang through. *

MERCURY

Well, pop a mint 'cause I'm gonna stay clean this time. I mean it. No more slip-ups.

(hand on her belly)

I've found purpose.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - DAY

Jizelle's angry. She mumbles to herself. But it's in a deep voice - her natural male voice. *

She rummages through the sofa seats. *

JIZELLE *

Where's the damn phone? *

From upstairs Avery yells down: *

AVERY (O.S.) *

By the T.V. Mom. *

Jizelle grimaces. *How did he hear and how'd he know it's her?* *

She takes the cell. *

INTERCUT - DARNELL'S CAR *

An Iphone vibrating on a leg... Krishna's leg. She's in the front seat of

*

Same clothes as last night. They're parked in a cornfield-- a nice hideout.

 KRISHNA
 (in a whisper)
 Hello.

*

Jizelle clears her throat. Back to the voice we know.

*

 JIZELLE
 (thankful)
 Was hoping you weren't in class...

Looking for a lie...

 KRISHNA
 No, I'm in the library. Studying.

 JIZELLE
 (whispers)
 Avery's got no school; I can't reach his godmother...

 KRISHNA
 No problem. Give me thirty.
 (hangs up, to Darnell)
 You need to call home.

INT. FERTILITY CLINIC - OFFICE - DAY

DOCTOR JARRED CLEMMONS (60's) is the best in his field.

His office is decorated with his accomplishments dating back to the early nineties -- knickknacks that indicate this is a fertility specialists office.

He and Jizelle sit across from each other. She slides him an envelope. He opens it. All cash.

 CLEMMONS
 Thicker than usual.

 JIZELLE
 For the month. Tired of seeing you every week.

He tosses it in his drawer.

 JIZELLE (CONT'D)
 Can we start this now?

He hits a stop clock on his desk. It counts down from 03:00, 02:59...

JIZELLE (V.O.)

Routine extortion. The hefty price
I pay for living this lie.

CLEMMONS

In all fairness, I think you should
know he's reached out to colleagues
of mine. He's obsessive about this
baby thing.

JIZELLE

But we know that's impossible. And
I pay you--

CLEMMONS

For confidentiality but he's
scoping other doctors - one even
sent for your records. Look, my
mouths sealed, but the more hands
embroiled...*(the more it'll
cost...)*

*
*
*

She stares at him with disdain. He shrugs with his face.

*

CLEMMONS

-- I told you when you migrated,
come clean. Live in the truth.
Seven years we've danced around
this but I mean, in all honesty,
(re: her beauty)
look at you... No straight man
would mind...
(pause, suggestive)
...And I don't just speak for
myself.

*

JIZELLE

You perfidious spawn of evil.

*
*

...The CLOCK is at 00:00...
Jizelle exits first with a fake smile.

JIZELLE

Thank you, DR. Clemmons, so much,
we really hope so.

INT. RODGERS' KITCHEN/ LIVING ROOM - DAY

*

Avery makes a sandwich just as well as a person with vision.

AVERY

Oh, and Krishna, I figured out what
I want to be: boxing world
champion!

*

*

Krishna's in the LIVING ROOM engrossed in her text message
that appears on the screen from Darnell.

Avery continues talking

Darnell - *I'm telling her today. You're who I want.*

Krishna - *No! Don't do that.*

Krishna drops her phone. Overwhelmed with guilt.

AVERY

... And if they're making life on
mars you think they won't make eyes
for me? If I dedicate myself now--

*

Trying to get back in big sister mode:

KRISHNA

How'd you hear about boxing?

AVERY

I hear about everything.

Krishna's phone beeps. Text message. It reads:
Darnell - *You there?*

AVERY (CONT'D)

But to answer your question,
'boxing fights for the blind',
writes stories on it. They're good,
I feel like I'm taking punches.
But... Krishna, I'm confused about
the squared circle. What's it look
like?

The doorbell rings -- a unique customized ring!

*

AVERY

Godmom!

Avery, shuffles to the door with a sandwich in his hand.

He opens the door...

*

PAULETTE

Hi, handsome.

*

*

... and hugs PAULETTE (40'S). Paulette has aged like wine. She has an 'air of wealth' about her. Walks and speaks with confidence -- calls the shots. *

Paulette smiles at Krishna. Is it a '*I know you're fucking my husband*' smile or a '*nice to see you*' smile? It can be interpreted as both.

INT. JIZELLE'S X5 - EVENING

Levi's in the passenger seat. They hold hands as she guides the steering wheel with her left hand.

JIZELLE
How was the flight?

LEVI
(shrugs)
Lonely.

Levi rubs her leg in a sexual way. She smiles.

CUT TO:

We're in the back row of the X5. Levi fucks her brains out from the back. Sweat on both of their faces.

He lets out a grunt. Stops. Still. He removes himself from inside her and slumps down.

...MOMENTS LATER...

JIZELLE
God, that was good.

They laugh. Her head on his lap. She looks to the roof.

JIZELLE
Think they heard us? Even over the music?

LEVI
God himself heard you, darling, so I wouldn't be surprised.

Reveal that they're in HIS CHURCH'S PARKING LOT...
And it sounds like Choir Rehearsal is going on inside...

Levi runs his fingers through her hair. Jizelle notices he's breathing very fast.

JIZELLE
(careful)
Did...did you take an Ex--

LEVI
A teeny piece--

JIZELLE
Levi!
(playful)
Coulda' saved me some.
(no response, beat)
There's someone-- who I know you'll
approve-- willing to be our
carrier.

LEVI
(scoffs)
I'm not in the 'rent a womb'
business. All kindza' spirits start
developing that way.

JIZELLE
No, honey, our genes: Your sperm,
my eggs.

LEVI
Won't do. I'm a traditional man.

JIZELLE
I'll miscarry. Again.

Levi goes into deep thought. A slight grin escapes his face.
It makes Jizelle uncomfortable and curious.

LEVI
Hell, that may make things better.
It's more of an emotional pain than
physical, right?

JIZELLE
WHAT?!

She uprights. Angered.

LEVI
Where there's tragedy, there's
opportunity.

JIZELLE
You're kidding right?!

Levi senses she's offended. Clears his throat:

LEVI
Of course, Jay.

A weak smile to cover his lie. She doesn't believe him, although she wants to.

LEVI
We talk enough about me. What about you?

He motions for her to rest on his lap. She reluctantly does.

JIZELLE
I'd like to put my counseling skills to use once we elevate. A lot of first ladies don't have an outlet. We're judged and envied by the same people we counsel and lay before God for.

LEVI
But how would that advance the ministry? The objective is families.

JIZELLE
I thought the goal was souls--

LEVI
The goal is God's work. And his work for this ministry is families. We wanna win entire households for the kingdom.

JIZELLE
(seeking clarification)
Let me get this right, my idea doesn't fall in line with (the vision)--

LEVI
(over)
No, not for this season. Your focus should be on growing our family. Jizelle, you know how salient this is to me?

JIZELLE
Getting on TV? Or my life?

LEVI
Not a breathing thing means more to me than you.

(MORE)

LEVI (CONT'D)

I'm clear on the times you nearly perished carrying life, but that was before you were saved. Now your womb's anointed, baby.

She holds back her tears. Levi lays hands on her belly.

LEVI

Lord, in the name of Jesus, I speak life into this womb! Healing, full term pregnancy in Jesus name. May my wife's endometrial lining be as strong as Samson was.

(Jizelle quietly laugh)

May she birth kings and queens in your son's mighty name.

(done praying)

God's going to do it. You believe that?

(no response)

He is. And we're gon' have fun assisting him.

He flashes a sly smile, leans in and kisses her.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Avery, Krishna and Paulette sit on the couch watching television. Krishna has a notepad in front of her. She's studying too.

Avery and Paulette play a game. Avery tries his best to color within the lines of a picture. He's failing miserably. But Paulette encourages him on:

PAULETTE

Good job so far. You peeking?

Avery tips his glasses to his nose, revealing a blind eye.

AVERY

Aww ya' caught me, godmother.

They share a laugh.

AVERY

(Krishna)

Krishna, your phone.

KRISHNA

Huh?

There's a flash on the screen. She snatches it.

Krishna checks her messages from Darnell - 9 unread messages.

She scrolls down and sees -

"Why aren't you answering me!"

"I'm on my way"... Then "I'm outside. I'll come to the door"

She gets off the cushioned seat. Paulette stares at her with those eyes again - does she know?

AVERY

Something smells.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Krishna has the water on. She texts back - "No, she's here."
She exhales. Seconds pass, then--

-- DING! Doorbell rings! Krishna almost shits herself.

PAULETTE (O.S.)

I got it.

Krishna locks the door. Nervous as hell.

INTERCUT - LIVING ROOM/BATHROOM

Paulette peers out the window and makes a strange face.

Krishna hears the muffled voices of a man and woman. There's a tap on the window. She lifts the curtain - it's Darnell.

Paulette follows the NEIGHBOR out. She spies a familiar car that seems to be parked in the cut. Gives it a long look. She can't make out the license plate.

NEIGHBOR

Again, forgive my--

PAULETTE

(dry, not focused)

Not a problem. I'll make sure she gets it.

Paulette's too focused on the car to pay him any mind. She lifts her hand and gives a polite wave.

...BATHROOM...

KRISHNA

(pleading)

Darnell- Why-- Your wife is in my
living room.

She tries to close the window, he stops her.

DARNELL

I need you to listen to me. We'll
make it together.

KRISHNA

(whispers)

NO. My father won't pay for my
school if I--

DARNELL

I'll tutor rich kids.

KRISHNA

No. My tuition exceeds your salary.

DARNELL

We'll figure it out. I will.

KRISHNA

Please go.

DARNELL

You're not a child. How he feels
shouldn't matter so much. I've got
us, okay!

(pause)

We're family now.

Jizelle pulling into her driveway, headlights on.

DARNELL

Shit, I gotta go.

Darnell sees the X5 coming up the driveway. He takes off.
Jizelle just misses him.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Jizelle sets her bags down.
Krishna walks in at the same time.

PAULETTE

Just missed your neighbor.

JIZELLE

Saw him on my way in. He's having a surprise party for his wife. Told me to invite you, said he liked your flair. Krish, you ready?

PAULETTE

--I'll take her.

JIZELLE

Levi should be here any minute...

PAULETTE

Save him the trip.

INT. PAULETTE'S CAR - NIGHT

Paulette pulls off slowly with Krishna in the passenger seat... She stop. Points to the seatbelt.

PAULETTE

Safety first.

Krishna puts on her seatbelt. Paulette pulls off.

PAULETTE

Would hate to be hit from behind and not protected.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - BASEMENT

Levi tip-toes down the stairs and into the 12 seat

THEATER ROOM

He locks the door behind him. Turns on the projector. Connects it to Wi-fi and searches the internet.

He throws on a pair of wireless headphones and presses play.

We can hear soft moaning and aggressive fucking. On the screen--

Porn! Levi pulls out a bottle of hand sanitizer - it'll have to do. He hits a button that turns the lights off. Goes to work. Groans and moans...

Unbeknownst to him, Zara is in the row right behind him, scrunched up in a ball. She was asleep.

As her dad wacks off, she creeps out in complete silence. Disgusted. She SLAMS the door shut behind her.

Levi, looks over his shoulder, *did I hear something?* -Nothing there. Back to business.

(As Levi looks over his shoulder, we see that the porn is two women, but one has breast and a penis. Transgender porn?)

As he handles himself, we spot a small bag of coke left on Zara's seat.

INT. PAULETTE'S CAR - NIGHT

Dark and foggy. RAIN pounds the windshield. Paulette drives slow, navigates the best she can. Wipers are on high speed.

Paulette uses a paper towel to wipe the fog from the window. Then grants it to Krishna to wipe her side. Krishna nervously proceeds.

PAULETTE

I hear you've got my husband this semester.

Krishna stops wiping. Caught off guard. Stung. Gathers her response:

KRISHNA

I think-- yeah, but like I mostly do his class online *and stuff*.

PAULETTE

How you like him?

Krishna's uneasy and it shows.

KRISHNA

...I'm doing well in his class so I guess he's okay.

Paulette glances at her, displaying a smile we can't read.

PAULETTE

He's not the most memorable man but he has his ways about him. You're not the first.

Krishna laughs. Hopes that will close the topic. She takes a granola bar out of her purse and tears into it.

PAULETTE

(re: food)

Some palate you have. Third one since we pulled off. Spaghetti at the house...

KRISHNA

I'm so engrossed in my studies, I sometimes forget {to eat}...

PAULETTE

When I carried twins -- may they rest in peace --

KRISHNA

Oh no! That's not what's going on here.

She covers Krishna's hand with hers. Comforting. Krishna snatches her hand away.

KRISHNA

You're making me uncomfortable.

Paulette gets down to business...

PAULETTE

Look, I'm your best friend in this situation--

KRISHNA

What situation?

PAULETTE

Have you told Darnell?

Krishna, unsure if she should speak. Decides to stay quiet...A beat...

PAULETTE

You know Krishna, you'll be remembered by two things: your choices and decisions.

KRISHNA

I choose not to engage.

PAULETTE

(stern)

Fine. But you will listen. Abortion isn't a choice for you. It's not what you want but the father's not your ideal candidate.

(MORE)

PAULETTE (CONT'D)

Probably a closeted homosexual with HPV. Something you may wanna get checked for. Who knows? Maybe I'm just throwing shit at the wall. But you need me. You have no one. And despite what he feeds you he'll never leave his wife. Threatens to, but he knows you'll beg him not to. You'd disgrace your family name and that's something Levi won't let you live with. But if you have this baby, I'll guide you through it. I'm powerful. I'll keep you safe; protect your family's image. Raise the child as mine. It'll be as if a child was never born.

INT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Avery, Zara and Jizelle are at the table. Breakfast set before them.

AVERY

Where's Pa'?

Levi saunters in. Same clothes as last night. He takes a sausage off her plate. Zara's grossed out.

ZARA

Ilkkk, dad! I didn't hear any water. You clean your hands.

Levi pulls sanitizer from his shirt pocket. Takes his seat. Zara pushes her plate away.

ZARA

Gross.

She spits the food into a napkin.

LEVI

Twenty-five percent cleaner than soap.

ZARA

And dries ten times faster than lubricant.

AVERY

What's lubricant?

LEVI

YOUNG LADY.

*

ZARA

Pussy oil--

JIZELLE

ZARA!

Avery busts his gut laughing.
Zara holds her hands to her chest: *what did I do?*

INT. BARNEY'S TRAILER PARK

Spic-and-span clean. You'd have no problem eating off the floor. Yet, Barney enters and he doesn't look so fresh-- Jack Daniels in his hand.

Mercury's at the computer desk. A can of soda on the desk without a coaster. Barney slides a coaster underneath it.

MERCURY

I give up! This shit's too hard.
And 'giggle' ain't showing me shit.

BARNEY

My God, you're touched in the mind.
It's Google.

Barney takes over the computer.

MERCURY

Well why's it got two G's?

The Google search box:
BRANDON LEVINE from Dividan County.

BARNEY

SURE YOU GOT THE RIGHT NAME? You
know your brain and all...

She gives him the middle finger.

BARNEY

...The baby's name, you forgot?

Mercury ponders his question...

A KNOCK on the door. Barney opens it.
Two JEHOVAH WITNESSES'.
He hides the Jack Daniels behind his back.

WITNESS #1

Greetings in our Lord's name.

INT. DARNELL'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Professor Darnell is in his element. Class has ended.
The students gather their stuff and stand up to leave.

DARNELL

...Test on Tuesday, the findings of
Jesus.

(under his breath)

And other shit we can't prove.

*

*

LATER

*

Classroom is empty. Darnell's behind his desk grading papers.

*

"HARRUMPH" - the sound of someone clearing their throat.

*

Darnell looks up...

*

Paulette stands in the doorway smiling at him. Flirtatious.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - HALL

Paulette and Darnell walk towards the cafe.

Krishna comes out the bathroom - stops in her tracks...

Paulette smiles at her, Darnell freezes for a second and
pulls it together.

INT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - CAFE

Sitting across from each other, bored, Paulette and Darnell.
Darnell's shifty. Looking over Paulette's shoulder. Nervous.

A plate of Taco's, only Paulette eats. Darnell barely touches
his food.

PAULETTE

You haven't taken a bite.

(some beats)

Try em'. I made them myself.

He shakes 'no', but in a polite way. Puts his hand on his
stomach: full.

DARNELL

Had I known you were coming, I'da
starved myself.

A closed mouth smile: phony as he can be.

PAULETTE

That makes me feel better.

DARNELL
Sweetie , I have a shit-load of
papers to grade. I may stay late.

PAULETTE
(with sarcasm)
What about the home office you
begged me for?

DARNELL
I didn't beg.

PAULETTE
("correction")
I'm sorry. 'Hinted at needing.'
Repeatedly.

DARNELL
Is this what you want to do?

PAULETTE
What happened to us?

Darnell debates if he should pretend to not know what she means or be just as forward...

DARNELL
Growth. Different directions,
interest; goals.

PAULETTE
So I'm not imagining things?
(Darnell shakes: no)
(a beat)
My birthday was two days ago.

He perks up: *Oh, shit it was.* Stuck. Ashamed.
Paulette waits for a response - something other than the
guilt in his eyes...

DARNELL
My mind just isn't where it was--

PAULETTE
--Your heart. I don't wanna know
about your mind -- I wanna know
about your heart, Darnell.

He stares down at the table.

DARNELL
There's not another woman if that's
what you're thinking.

PAULETTE
 (sarcastic)
 I'd be surprised if there was.

He shoots her a look *what's that supposed to mean?*
 Paulette rocks her head back and forth - debating...

PAULETTE
 Well legally you're right.

Darnell has an addled look on his face.

PAULETTE
 All these years and you still
 haven't clued in to the fact that I
 know you better than you know you?

She stares, takes him in. Myriad of emotions. Remains calm.

He's befuddled. How the hell does she know?
 And that indiscernible smile is on her face again.

PAULETTE
 Can't get you out of this, Darnell.

DARNELL
 I don't need-- out of-- what?--
 What are you talking about?! What
 did you do Paulette?

PAULETTE
 Just take a bow and come backstage--

DARNELL
 I need to get back to work.

PAULETTE
 Don't keep lying to me.

DARNELL
 You need help okay. I can't keep
 pacifying your craziness.

PAULETTE
 Darnell. Cut the shit.

DARNELL
 I am.

He slams his fist on the table. Turns to her. Eye to eye.

DARNELL
 WE'RE DONE.

Paulette continues on as if he said nothing.

PAULETTE

What I wanted most you gave to
someone else.

INT. CIGAR BAR - EVENING

Levi puffs a cigar. He sits across from two large men:
BROCK (50's), has to be on steroids or been lifting since he
was born because no man's naturally this big.

ALEX, (late 40's), even temperament-- the head honcho.

ALEX

Where's our bag?

LEVI

Well fellas how's the family?

(no response)

Okay. Well business?

(no response)

No smalltalk?

BROCK

No wining and dining tonight,
fuckboy. The money?

LEVI

And you'll get it but no foreplay
first.

ALEX

The bag, Deac.

LEVI

Reverend. And I said you'll get it.
But I need something. I want out.

ALEX

So you're ready to die?

BROCK

--The money.

LEVI

I need out first, okay. I need your
word that we're done here.

They're growing impatient.

BROCK

A lot of mouth for a motherfucka'
breathing only 'cause I say so.

Brock gets out his seat and sits next to Levi.
Squeezing him all the way in.

Brock swings his cigar clipper around his pointer finger.

LEVI

I want to extend an opportunity to
you.

Brock slams his fist on the table. Garnering attention.

ALEX

You playing with me!?

LEVI

It's all with me. Every cent. But
wouldn't you want more?

Brock threatens him with the cigar clipper. Holds it to
Levi's face.

BROCK

You want to keep licking your
wife's pussy?

Brock lets that threat linger in the air.

Brock pats him down, feels nothing.

ALEX

There's a car outside your church.
Inside that car is a pyromaniac
ready to turn your temple of
worship into a lake of fire.

BROCK

He gets off on the flames.

ALEX

Literally.

BROCK

Strokes his dick to it.

Brock taps his jacket pocket, where his cell is.

BROCK (CONT'D)

{He's} Just waiting for the 'go'.

LEVI

--Wait. Listen. It's in my car--
I mean c'mon, you think I'd carry
that kind of cash around?

Brock snatches his keys. Stares him down: better not be lying. Brock goes to exit.

ALEX

Wait. Steak first.

BROCK

(re: money)
I'll get the pasta.

Brock continues on his way.

LEVI

Al, {we've been connected} over a
decade. {That} counts for nothing?

INT. THERAPIST OFFICE

Jizelle sits on the bench, calm. Leyda paces back and forth.

LEYDA

Now this?

Jizelle gives her a look. Raises her eyebrows: yes this.

LEYDA

And what about what I want?

JIZELLE

One step at a time.

LEYDA

I had plans for us, Jizelle! Life
plans--

JIZELLE

Lets think logically--

LEYDA

So what good is I to you? Just use
me?

Leyda slows down the pacing as she considers whatever has been proposed.

LEYDA

You're hiding something. What is
it?

(MORE)

LEYDA (CONT'D)

(no response)

Why keep it from me, Jizelle? You said I make your world go 'round.

JIZELLE

(intense)

And I meant it, Leyda. That's why I need you; why I asked you to bare my child. I want us connected forever.

Jizelle lovingly grabs her hand. Kisses it. Eye contact.

JIZELLE

Can I count on you like I believe I can?

EXT. CIGAR BAR - PARKING LOT

Brock rummages through the trunk of a Cadillac. Bingo! 50k cash.

Click click, the sound of a gun being cocked.

VILL

Don't move you racist motherfucka.

VILL (22, hat pulled low), wearing a Jesus Chain, has the barrel of his silencer pressed to Brock's spine.

HOVAIN (17), Vill's younger brother, snatches the money from Brock.

Brock moves suddenly -- thfff thffff, two shots in the ass. Brock falls to the ground. Screams! His shirt lifts up revealing a swastika tattoo.

VILL

Told ya' dumbass not to move.

Vill quickly does the 'sign' of the cross and mouths: 'forgive me'.

Vill nods to Hovain: *you know what to do.*

Vill drops 5 bags of ecstasy pills in the trunk.

INT. HOVAIN'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Vill in the back; Hovain at the wheel. A WHITE GIRL in the passenger seat. She's on the phone --

WHITE GIRL

(frantic)

There's a dead body and bunch of
drugs, and guns! Send Cops now! --
The Cigar Lounge!

She breaks the phone in half and tosses it out the

INT. CIGAR BAR

Alex and Levi watch as the cops rush into the parking lot.
Alex is alarmed. Shoots Levi a look: *you son of a bitch.*

Alex watches as Brock is handcuffed to a stretcher and led
into the back of an ambulance.

LEVI

All business is personal.

Just as Alex goes to pull his gun, Police swarm in.
Alex changes his mind.

INT/EXT. CAR/ LEVI'S CHURCH

The ARSONIST sits behind the wheel.
Matches, paper and a vial (cologne sample size) of gasoline
are in the front seat. He sniffs the gasoline, delighted by
the fragrance. The alarm to his phone goes off.

He's disappointed. He pulls off.

CUT TO:

EXT. DITCH - NIGHT

**We're back at the crash.* (opening scenes)*

Shattered glass, deployed airbags; windshield cracked; roof
caved in...

Leyda's bloody. Her face is scratched up. Stuttered breaths.
Her attempt to remove her seatbelt is failing. Jammed. Only
her right arm seems to be functioning. The left shoulder
looks dislocated.

...No sign of help near...

To her right -- the folder she stole is on the floor.
She tugs the seat belt, gains some slack -- it gives.
She painfully stretches for the files, her fingers dance
around it until she grasps it.

Leyda makes another attempt to free herself...
Finally the seatbelt unlocks.

Gas leaks from underneath the car...
A small fire starts outside the passengers side.

Leyda painfully rushes out... and trips. Bangs her knee on a large rock. The medical papers go everywhere. While on the ground she sees gas leaking.

Leyda crawls away using her only good arm... dragging the rest of her body.

Wait, the papers. Against better judgement she goes back to gather them, but the wind blows them towards the fire. She reaches for one in the air -- succeeds, but falls on her shoulder. Hard!

She stares at the medical paper in hand:
BRANDON LEVINE (SRS) ***sexual reassignment surgery***

A spark turns to a flame and startles her. She slides back; the paper flies out her hand and into the flame.

There's a full on fire and it engulfs the BMW. The files burning with it.

Leyda looks on, befuddled as hell.

INT. TRAILER PARK - MORNING

Barney fries an egg while Mercury sips from a mug.

BARNEY

Well lets try the courthouse. The birth certificate gotta do us some good.

MERCURY

His name ain't on it, Barney.
That's what I'm trying to tell ya'.

BARNEY

From what I gather you don't know shit about your son.

MERCURY

(sadly)
Well, no, I don't know a whole entire a lot.

BARNEY

Maybe it's best you just stay on
out the picture. Let him be at
peace with his dad.

MERCURY

I don't know who's got my boy. For
all I know he could be in some
dungeon--

BARNEY

Oh, stop blowing puff.

MERCURY

You don't know!

Barney puts his egg on a plate and takes his seat. Drink of
choice: Jack Daniels.

BARNEY

I got a litter of children. Hell, I
bet all them is fine. Their mama's
was solid people.

MERCURY

You're missing the point. I'm clean
now. I deserve to see my boy. He
only seen me once.

BARNEY

(eggs)
Needs salt.

Barney grabs some salt from the cabinet.

Mercury stares at Barney, hesitant to ask him something, but
she must:

MERCURY

Babes...

Off her look, he rolls his eyes; knows what's coming.

MERCURY

... The case money. Can you help?
Might take some funding but we can
get an investigator on it. Speedy
things along, ya' know?

BARNEY

Them private investigators run
'bout 42 dollars an hour and all
they do is sit in the car.

MERCURY

That's just in the movies. They
cost more than that.

BARNEY

Oh no, real life, too.

MERCURY

(begging)
But Barns, please...

BARNEY

'But Barns' my ass. Quarter-Million
dollars can go fast at that rate.
I ain't going to the poorhouse
trying to fix your guilty
conscience.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Leyda's bruised up. Angry. Not in the mood to socialize.

NURSE

You were very lucky. Slight
bruising but nothing major. Elbow
sprain.

LEYDA

What about my hip?

NURSE

Ice. No damage.
(re: arm)
Just keep it in the sling, limit
your movement. You have anyone
that can drive you home?

LEYDA

My partner.

Just then Jizelle walks through the curtain.
At first the Nurse doesn't see her.

JIZELLE

(concerned)
Babe! God are you alright?

Jizelle goes to kiss her on the lips but Leyda turns away.
That's when Jizelle notices the Nurse.

Nurse senses familiarity in Jizelle's face. Her eyes widen--

NURSE
First Lady J?!

Nurse's eyes dart back and forth between them. She extends her hand.

NURSE
It's me, Amber. From church.

Jizelle shakes her hand.

AMBER (CONT'D)
So you two are business partners?
(thick silence)
She had just been telling me she's
known you for--

Amber decides to move on.

AMBER
So, yeah, I was just telling her,
she's gonna be fine. Just slight
bruising--

JIZELLE
Nothing that God can't heal.

Amber's so confused.

AMBER
Yeah. Amen to that.

LEYDA
(stern; to Jizelle)
Lets go.

Suspicious, Amber looks at Jizelle.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELEVATOR

Jizelle and Leyda ride it down. Jizelle holds the coat.
Leyda's arm is in a sling but she can walk.
Jizelle feels through the pockets of the coat.

JIZELLE
Where is it? Who took your coat
off? It's not in here.

Leyda's silent. Anger on her face.

JIZELLE (CONT'D)
The files! Where are they?

LEYDA
No 'hey, how you doing'?

*

JIZELLE
Leyda, you don't know how
important... I need those.

An uncomfortable beat.

LEYDA
Well they roasted with the car.

A pause... then Jizelle smiles.

JIZELLE
Are you sure?
(Leyda nods)
How do you know?

LEYDA
They was the last things to catch
on fire before I did.

*

*

Elevator stops. Doors open.

LEYDA
Always wondered how you could be so
callous and manipulative but I
realize why now.
(turns to her)
You're a typical man.

*

*

*

Jizelle's face drops. Did she say what she thinks she did?

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Leyda walks as fast as she can with her limp. Jizelle catches
up.

LEYDA
And now I'm even more confused.

JIZELLE
Trust me.

LEYDA
Jizelle no, I want the truth.

JIZELLE
It's ashes now.

Now Jizelle walks the lead. Leyda's pacing behind her. More
ferociously. Wants answers.

LEYDA
Jizelle. JIZELLE!

She snatches Jizelle's arm with her free hand. Rough. Tight.
Looks into Jizelle's eyes.

LEYDA
I almost lost my life for you!
(points to her abdomen)
A second time. You owe me this!

Still staring into her eyes... Jizelle shows no emotion.
Blank face.

LEYDA
...Fine Brandon!

Jizelle SLAPS her. Regrets it instantly.

JIZELLE
Stay away from me and my family!
Forever!

She runs to her car, gets in, and speeds off.
Leyda, left in shock. Tears forming.
Everything happened so fast she hasn't processed it.

INT. TRAILER PARK - DAY

Mercury reads a pamphlet. Tears well up in her eyes.

MERCURY
(re: pamphlet)
There's something to this, Barn.

BARNEY
Horse-shit if you ask me. All of
it.

MERCURY
Uh-uh. Horseshit don't make me feel
this way. I feel like it's fate.

BARNEY
You just looking for something to
believe in.

His phone rings. He answers.

BARNEY
Yeah...?

Meanwhile Mercury sets the pamphlet down -- a Kingdom Hall tract. Crosses to Barney.

BARNEY (CONT'D)

...Well how soon?

(turns his back, whispers)

I don't give six shits, honestly, I ain't trying to deal with her relapsing... So how long?

(rolls his eyes)

God dammit! Can't do it cheaper?!...yeah. Bye.

He hangs up. She waits with baited breath. He faces her. Smiles. She smiles back.

MERCURY

Baby, thank you!

She jumps into his arms. Wraps her legs around him.

INT. LEVI'S CHURCH - OFFICE - DAY

Vill dumps 50k on Levi's desk. Wide smile. Adrenaline rush. *

VILL

Pastor, I felt a rush.

Levi put his finger over his mouth - shhh. Levi slides him 3 stacks: 15k. *

LEVI

You done now, right?

(no response)

This is double what you left in that trunk. Enough to go straight. For good. I did this for you.

VILL

I appreciate it, Pastor. You ever need me--

LEVI

No. Was a one-time thing no one can ever know about. *

Levi pretends to zip his lips shut. Vill nods.

LEVI

Listen, I believe in your purpose. I love you, son.

Levi gives him a hug and a kiss on the cheek like a father. *

LEVI
You slimming down...

*
*

... as he pats his chest. Precautionary?

*

VILL
(beaming)
I be in the gym, you know.

*
*
*

LEVI
Hows your mental?

*
*

VILL
I'm better, Pastor. Ya teachings
and spending time in my Bible and
shit- stuff...

*
*
*
*

LEVI
That's good son. You know I come
from that. Now go do the Lord's
work... and remember...

*
*

Levi puts his pointer finger over his mouth. Smiles. *Hope you understand what I'm saying.*

VILL
Amen. I will, Pastor.

LEVI
Wait!

Levi holds his hand out: *you forgot something.*
Vill pulls the silencer from his pocket and hands it over.

*

INT. AVERY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Avery kneeling by his bedside.

AVERY
God, please help me see. I just
want to see my mom just once,
please. And let me be normal like
other people. Can Jesus please heal
me? This all I want God. In your
son's name. Ahmen.

INT. DARNELL'S HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING

Nice, comfortable and spacious. This room is blue. It's set
up like a nursery.

*

Paulette fluffs the pillows in the crib and straightens the sheets. *
The other half is decorated and set up the same except the *
wall is pink. This nursery was set up for twins. *

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Paulette sets the bacon on the plate.

PAULETTE
Honey! Food's done.

Darnell sits at the table. His body language is that of a child that's been scolded and still on punishment.

She sets a plate before him.

PAULETTE
Have you seen outside? Maybe we go *
for a walk? *

He looks out the corner of his eye. Nods. Starts his bacon.

PAULETTE
You're not acting like yourself.

He gives her a look: *Is she crazy?* *
He drops his bacon on the plate and stares straight ahead: *

DARNELL *
How much longer? *

PAULETTE *
I don't understand. *

DARNELL *
Fuck you. *

She grins. Amusing herself. Sits. Picks bacon out his plate. *

PAULETTE *
So crispy. I hated pork until the *
air fryer. *

Darnell pushes away from the table to get up. *

PAULETTE *
Stay. *

DARNELL *
I have work-- *

PAULETTE

(intense)

STAY.

He obliges.

PAULETTE

Last week I was driving through Metsgill park. And. I remember when you would flirt with me at the shop and you'd tell me how serious you took things in life and we'd head there, sit on the swing and just talk and you'd pick my brain - never forcing anything. And I remember how it felt to just indulge in that type of happiness, where there was no pressure and the anguish I felt when I shared where I was at tat that time. Those conversations were my outlet. An ailing husband was something I never wanted. But when I told you, you embraced me more. And that, up until recently as I play it back, that got me thinking. I thought it was genuine between us - meant to be. Two generations meeting in the middle. But it brought me back to perspective. I put my emotions to the side and sought truth. Painful, painful thing to do. Yet frankly, we've never really been in love at the same time.

(grabs his hand lovingly)

I know why you married me--

He goes to speak but she cuts him off--

PAULETTE

-- Uh-uh. Don't rebut it. And I had my selfish reasons too. But your greed came first. But I'm happy you found "love", because you gave me the same thing -- a chance to be complete. A baby. And once the child's here, have your divorce, I won't protest. I know you'll seek an unearned piece of my fortune but as long as I have sole custody, I won't dispute the prenup.

(MORE)

PAULETTE (CONT'D)

But be mindful, if you decide to get slick, I got enough on you to get alimony from your already pathetic paycheck.

He's uneasy. Feels like less than a man.

PAULETTE (CONT'D)

You know what? I changed my mind. Let's go clothes shopping. For the baby.

*

DARNELL

(hesitant, re: mental)

You're not right...

*

She grabs his face with the palms of her hands and gives him a long kiss.

PAULETTE

Don't. Fuck. With. Me.

She saunters out like a boss.

INT. SPRINTER - EVENING

Levi's in the back with Bishop Saunders. They shake hands.

BISHOP SAUNDERS

Congratulations.

LEVI

Thank you, Bishop.

BISHOP SAUNDERS

How's it feel?

LEVI

(exhales)

I'll be better when it's official.

BISHOP SAUNDERS

The Committee stands behind you. Just one more vote.

LEVI

Maddock.

EXT. MADDOCK'S MANSION - EVENING

Levi's led in by a Maid.

BISHOP SAUNDERS (V.O.)
 Yeah, Father keeps vice grips on
 grudges. And Father's vote holds
 the most weight.

INT. MADDOCK'S MANSION - CONTINUOUS

Levi follows the Maid up the grand staircase and into an

BISHOP SAUNDERS (V.O.)
 ...It needs to be smoothed out;
 things between you two. I'm sure
 you understand.

OFFICE ROOM

Off the side of the stairs.

The Maid opens the door. Levi strolls in. Heart in his hand.

LEVI
 Father Maddock.

A short, pudgy woman (66) with a shaved head turns around.
 This is FATHER ROSETTE MADDOCK.

EXT. RODGERS' RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - EVENING

Avery's perched on the balcony. Crying.
 Zara opens the screen door and sits beside him.

ZARA
 (re: tears)
 (Were you) listening to happy feet?
 (no response;joking)
 Found out what you look like?

He keeps crying, ignoring her. She senses the seriousness.

ZARA
 Ave, what's wrong?

He shakes his head: nothing.

ZARA
 C'mon, squat. Man up. Talk.

AVERY
 I feel out of place.

ZARA

Well you're blind and sitting on a second story balcony. How the hell you even...

AVERY

Nothing adds up anymore.

ZARA

The God shit, right?

AVERY

With ma. I never met my dad, Zara.

ZARA

Dad's are not all they're cracked up to be.

AVERY

Easy to say when you have one.

ZARA

We have this thing where we don't appreciate all we have because when somethings missing we look to what we didn't have - what this world tells us we should have. But every thing we need is in here. Not some book or some shit.

Avery shakes no. Not agreeing.

ZARA

You'll see.

He snarls.

ZARA (CONT'D)

Did you roll your eyes at me?

AVERY

The thought came to mind.

ZARA

Well my ole' man's been there for you, so...

AVERY

Only 'cause he's with my mom.

She nods in agreement, knowing he can't see her. Sympathetic tone:

*
*

ZARA

No, he genuinely loves you. He does. I hated him for it.

*

(understanding)

I get cha'tho. Mines kinda opposite. Me and Krishna didn't have a mom. That's hardcore shit too. We knew who she was but, ya' know?

AVERY

I remember my dad's voice kinda. Sometimes mom thinks I'm sleep she says she love me', and she sounds like him.

*

ZARA

Well...see. That shows he's a part of you; speaking through your mom.

That doesn't help Avery at all.

AVERY

Would you believe that, Zara?

ZARA

Look, buddy, you've got two sisters, a step-dad and a mom that all love you. Be happy with that.

She hopes those words will comfort him but they don't. He's no better than before.

She tries another approach:

ZARA

Damn, this really bothers you. Look, what do you know about him?

AVERY

Mom don't tell me much, I guess he not her favorite person. Plus Mister Levi doesn't like that kind of talk in his house.

ZARA

I'll help you.

He perks up. Happy.

ZARA

But you have to do everything I tell you. And we have to be discreet about it.

AVERY
 (re: discreet)
 What's that mean?

PRELAP: BZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ...

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hair falls to the ground.

Zara's shaving Avery's head with clippers. She gathers his hair and puts it in a plastic bag.

He runs his hand over his shaved head.

AVERY
 Feels funny. How do I look?

ZARA
 Quite handsome actually.

That puts a beaming smile on his face.

INT. KRISHNA'S CAMPUS BEDROOM - NIGHT

We pan across the room slowly. Everything is neat and clean. The bed is made perfectly. There's a letter on the pillow. It reads:

*Dear Dad,
 I'm sorry. I just wanted to do right by you and God. Neither of you would be pleased with me. I hope you understand.*

Krishna

We come to the adjacent bathroom where the bath water is running... But the bathtub is empty...

Krishna steps into frame wearing latex gloves. She cleans the medicine cabinet mirror with windex...

Krishna opens the cabinet below the sink. Hesitant but committed. She takes Ammonia out, pours the entire bottle in the bucket...

Her breathing gets heavy. She grabs the bleach...

INT. THE RODGERS' RESIDENCE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lit candles on the dressers. Intimate setting.

Jizelle's in the bed, wearing her sexiest lingerie. Champagne glass in hand. Posing, waiting for--

Levi exits the bathroom in a great mood. Silk Pajamas on. He lifts his glass and they toast.

JIZELLE
So proud of you.

She spreads her legs. He lies between them.

JIZELLE (CONT'D)
Now may I have my man back?

He sips, then kisses her inner thighs...

LEVI
All yours baby.

JIZELLE
(flirtatious)
Wait, wait. Tell me how you did it?

LEVI
Chatter about Father'll kill the
ambience.

He resumes kissing. She reacts to the pleasure. He's getting closer to her spot.

JIZELLE
Honey, c'mon. You know your
business dealings get me wet.

LEVI
(re: tongue)
Got something else to do that
job...

Levi slides his tongue across his teeth like he's just had a delicious steak.

JIZELLE
(giggling)
Babe...

LEVI
(exhales; uprights)
I told him-- her, Father-- that I
was sorry but I stood by my
statements.

He buries his face between her legs, she lifts it up.

JIZELLE

And that's it?

LEVI

Mostly. She hollered and made threats. Said I'd never succeed out there and that's why she'll give me her vote, just to watch me fall on my face. It'd give her more pleasure than actually holding me back.

(re: vagina)

Now can I get back to dinner?

JIZELLE

(now concerned)

Well what did she mean by that?

LEVI

I think you've passed the states legal limit. See why I don't like you drinking? Start talking too much.

He sets her glass on the dresser. His cell VIBRATES...

LEVI

FUCK!

Grabs it. Reads the message:

KRISHNA - I'm sorry.

Levi's puzzled. Too horny to care right now.

He shoots a text back.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Krishna's on her knees, slumped over the bucket, SNIFFLING and GASPING for air, she's committed to this.

Her face flush... gagging... shaking...

Her cell, on the sink, BZZZZZ! A message pops up:

DAD - DON'T BE. GOING NATIONAL! Talk in the A.M.

THUD -- Krishna falls to the floor. Eyes rolled back in her skull. All white...

End of Pilot