

BETWEEN THE WALLS

' 'Stripped' '

by
Arcadio Reyes

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON AVENUE - MORNING

A bright sunny day on a perfect suburban street. EVELYN trots up the sidewalk with papers in her hand. She goes about sticking up posters -- of her missing son.

The front door to the Johnson household opens, out comes THEO. He goes to get into his car but sees Evelyn, approaches her.

THEO
Ms Hunter?

She doesn't respond, stares at the photograph of her son, lost in his eyes.

THEO (CONT'D)
Evelyn?

Evelyn snaps out of it -- turns to him.

EVELYN
I'm sorry, I didn't see you there.

THEO
It's fine. I... I was wondering if there is anything I could do...
(re: poster)
... to help?

EVELYN
Thank you, Theo, but I'm not so sure your Mother would like that much.

THEO
My Mother isn't the boss of me. And besides, we're neighbors. Aren't we supposed to help each other in times of need?

Evelyn thinks on this for a beat, then offers a relieved smile.

EVELYN
There's not much anyone can really do. The Sheriff has given up hope. Matt and Ally don't even talk about it anymore and --

THEO

How about I take some of those posters and put them up by my office downtown?

Evelyn nods, passes him a pile of papers. Theo offers a smile before getting in his car and driving off into the distance.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

DELLA stands by the window, watches Theo drive off, keeps her gaze on Evelyn. JARELL sits at the table, a cereal bowl in front of him.

JARELL

Mama...?

DELLA

What is it?

JARELL

There's no milk in my bowl.

Della slowly turns to him, narrows her eyes.

DELLA

You have legs, Jarell. I am not your slave.

JARELL

Okay.

Jarell heads to the fridge.

JARELL (CONT'D)

There's no milk.

Della almost *growls* with frustration. She grabs his cereal bowl and drops it in the bin.

DELLA

Then you'll go without.

And with that, she EXITS the room. Jarell watches her go, dejected.

INT. HUNTER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Evelyn comes through the back door and sets some posters down on the table. ALLY appears in the doorway.

EVELYN

Breakfast?

ALLY

No thanks. I think I'm gonna go on a diet.

EVELYN

Don't be ridiculous. Any skinnier and you'd look like a dead person.

ALLY

Gee, *thanks*, Mom.

EVELYN

Actually, Ally, I wanted to have a talk with you.

ALLY

Oh, I've got so much to --

EVELYN

Sit.

Ally cocks a brow, lowers into a chair. Evelyn follows her, sets down to cups of coffee.

ALLY

So what's up?

EVELYN

How are you?

ALLY

Come again?

EVELYN

I mean it. I'd really like to know. You'd usually die before you'd let me in on how you're feeling... but I'm interested.

Ally lets it sink in, then:

ALLY

Well, I'm good, I guess. I mean, I think I'm alright.

(beat)

I'm happy.

EVELYN

You are?

Evelyn looks relieved by the statement. Ally nods slightly, not completely comfortable.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Have you thought about Michael at all?

ALLY

No. Not really. I don't need to anymore.

EVELYN

Connor?

ALLY

Mom, what are you --?

EVELYN

Do you intend to start having sex with your lawyer?

ALLY

What?

EVELYN

It's just, I'd like to know beforehand, so I can make arrangements.

ALLY

Arrangements?

EVELYN

Dinner. Parties. Maybe you'll be moving in with him in the near future --?

ALLY

Mother. What has gotten into you?

EVELYN

I want to be apart of your life.

ALLY

Well if it's any consolation, you sure are being a thorn in my side.

EVELYN

I've already lost one son because I knew nothing about him. I won't let it happen again!

ALLY

Mom... I'm not going anywhere.

EVELYN

That's what they all say but eventually they all leave.

(beat)

And that's okay... with me... as long as you're happy.

ALLY
I am.

EVELYN
Good.

ALLY
Right. I'm gonna go now.

EVELYN
Yes.

Ally rises, heads to the door. She stops, kisses Evelyn on the cheek.

ALLY
I love you, Mom.

Evelyn smiles a little as Ally EXITS the kitchen. Evelyn grabs her keys and EXITS.

EXT. SANDERS RESIDENCE

Establishing shot.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - SCOTT'S ROOM

The sun shines through the closed curtains. There's KNOCKING at the door.

JANETTE (O.S.)
Scott? Breakfast's ready. Scott?

Pan the room to find SCOTT and CHRISTIAN in bed, huddled together.

SCOTT
Be right down, Mom.

Scott leans over to Christian as he begins to stir. He gently kisses him on the cheek.

SCOTT
Morning.

CHRISTIAN
Hey.

SCOTT
You okay?

CHRISTIAN
Sure. Why?

The boys sit up.

SCOTT

Think you were having bad dreams
or something.

CHRISTIAN

Was I talking in my sleep again?

SCOTT

Yeah. Something about *James*.

Scott's eyes lower.

CHRISTIAN

I don't remember.

SCOTT

Seemed pretty intense.

CHRISTIAN

Scott --? Are you jealous of my
dream?

SCOTT

No! I mean... I don't know.

Christian runs his fingers through Scott's hair -- smiles
softly.

CHRISTIAN

It's alright. But, Scott, we
haven't even...

SCOTT

I'm sorry.

CHRISTIAN

No, it's okay. I kinda like that
we haven't... done it.

SCOTT

You do?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah. It's like, I feel we can be
more than just physical. You
know?

SCOTT

Unlike James?

Christian's eyes dodge his.

CHRISTIAN

I don't wanna talk about him.

SCOTT

What happened, Chris? Why did you
come back without him?

CHRISTIAN

Scott --! Just drop it, please?

Scott reluctantly nods. Christian gets out of bed and
begins to get dressed. Scott watches him, worried.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE

There's KNOCKING at the door. LISA comes through, opens the
door to reveal Evelyn.

LISA

Evelyn. In my apartment.

EVELYN

I realized I'd never been here
before and thought I should at
least pay you a visit. I got you
this.

Evelyn pulls out a CHEESE SLICER. Lisa inspects it -- a
strange gift.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I was told you couldn't be
trusted with knives so I thought
this would be a simple solution.

Lisa's eyes narrow -- as if she could be any less
inconsiderate. Evelyn invites herself in.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Lisa practically throws the CHEESE SLICER in the corner of
the room, turns to Evelyn.

LISA

So did you only come around to
insult me or is there more?

EVELYN

Insult you? Lisa, I...? I
actually came to see Matthew. Is
he here?

LISA

No. He's at... he's somewhere
else.

EVELYN
Oh. Well, I guess this will give
us a chance to talk.

LISA
(apathetically)
Oh, how fun.

EVELYN
Sit.

Evelyn motions for Lisa to take a seat -- which she
reluctantly does.

INT. EMPTY NIGHTCLUB

MATT shows Ally the blueprints and plans for the nightclub.
She looks over them.

ALLY
You've really thought all this
through.

MATT
I like to think so.

ALLY
It sure is gonna take up a lot of
your time.

MATT
I guess.

ALLY
And with Lisa not exactly at her
best --?

MATT
I'm providing for our future.

ALLY
And what about the present, Matt?
If you hadn't noticed, she's not
exactly... stable.

MATT
It'll pass.

ALLY
Matt -?

MATT
It'll pass.

Matt sighs, takes a seat. Ally follows his lead, studies
his fatigued expression.

MATT (CONT'D)

I don't know if I can help her
the way she needs to be helped.

ALLY

Your her husband. If anyone can,
you can.

MATT

She doesn't let me in. I don't
know anything about her.

ALLY

You know she's crazy.

Matt shoots her a look.

ALLY (CONT'D)

About you! Crazy about you. Look,
she loves you, she depends on
you.

MATT

But how can I make her well when
she won't let me in? She won't
tell me her problems. She goes to
this psychiatrist and things seem
better for a day or two but...
you've seen it, you've seen what
she's like, and I don't think I
can handle coming home to that
all the time.

Ally rests her hand on his.

ALLY

You can. You know how I know
that?

MATT

How?

ALLY

Cos we're made of the same stuff,
Matt. If I can get away from
Michael, deal with Connor's
death, and still think about a
date with my lawyer, then you can
help your wife get healthy again.

Matt smiles, nods, then:

MATT

You're thinking about a date?

ALLY

I knew I'd regret saying that.

MATT

Do you even know this guy?

ALLY

I know that he's... a little arrogant at times and seems to know everything about me -- but he's sweet. He got me off the hook with that guy and his broken nose and suddenly realizing we conveniently got off topic.

MATT

No, no, no. If I have to spill my guts then you do too.

ALLY

Thank you, Matt, for the imagery that will stay with me all day. Look, I don't know what's going to happen...

(chuckles)

I don't know. And I like that I don't know. I want to be spontaneous and carefree and... I'm not going to plan this. It's just going to happen. And if it doesn't, then I don't care.

MATT

My little sister. All *growed* up.

ALLY

It took a while, huh?

MATT

I don't know if I've ever told you this before but I'm proud of you, Ally.

ALLY

Ditto.

Matt rests his hand on Ally's. A beat. They both retreat.

MATT

Well that was uncomfortable.

ALLY

Talk about sentimental.

MATT

You wanna call me a name?

ALLY

Wife neglecter.

MATT

Slut.

ALLY

(feigns shock)

I'm telling Mom about the
nightclub.

They pause. Ally brushes his arm before heading towards the door.

MATT

Ally --?

ALLY

I'm not really going to tell her,
Matt.

And with that, she's gone. Matt smiles.

INT. HOMECOMING REAL ESTATE

Theo is at his desk, looks up to see NATEISHA come through the door -- she looks pissed.

THEO

What's wrong?

NATEISHA

Your Mother.

THEO

What?

NATEISHA

Do you know what I've spent the
morning doing?

THEO

Your face?

NATEISHA

Look at my expression and I'll
let you come to the conclusion on
whether this is a time for jokes.

THEO

Nateisha --?

NATEISHA

I woke up to Jarell crying in his
room like a little white girl.

THEO

Is he alright?

NATEISHA

No, he's not. And god knows what kind of emotional damage your Mother is doing to him at the moment. She practically made him go without any breakfast and left him at home with no way of getting to school. *I* had to drive him there.

THEO

My Mom's been a little *off* lately but I'm sure she'll be fine soon.

NATEISHA

Yeah? Well she'd better. Cos I ain't gonna be doing her job, got it?

THEO

Yeah.

NATEISHA

Theo, you'd better get her sorted out or I'll be coming down on her like a ton of bricks. She may think she rules the roost but she ain't seen me pissed yet.

Theo is about to say something but Nateisha's already out the door. He sighs.

EXT. ASHTON CEMETERY

Della walks through the cemetery, comes to a headstone. She looks at the inscription: "FELIX JOHNSON. LOVING FATHER. DEVOTED HUSBAND." As inscriptions go, it's pretty vague.

Della lays a single white rose on the grave, kneels down. She stares at the headstone -- for a moment it looks as though she is about to cry -- but she doesn't.

GROUNDSKEEPER (O.S.)

Family?

Della turns to see the Groundskeeper. She rises, folds her arms.

DELLA

Husband.

GROUNDSKEEPER

You must miss him.

She turns to look at him, then looks back to the headstone, a questioning look.

DELLA
You would think so.

She continues to stare at the grave.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Evelyn and Lisa sit with their coffee.

EVELYN
You can talk to me, Lisa.

LISA
Really?

EVELYN
Yes. I would like to... get to know you a bit better.

LISA
Funny because I seem to recall a few words exchanged in the hospital in which you made it quite clear --

EVELYN
That was a long time ago. I've changed.

LISA
I'm not so sure.

EVELYN
Lisa... ever since Christian ran away, I've begun to realize that I have been pushing away the people who care about me the most... and who I care about. I don't want to do that anymore.

LISA
I... I guess we're more similar than I thought.

EVELYN
What do you mean?

LISA
I do it too. I push everyone away. I let them in, I let them get a glimpse of who I am, and I don't like it -- I don't like that they know what I look like inside because... it's not pretty.

EVELYN

But you are so strong, Lisa.

LISA

I'm really not.

EVELYN

No, you are. You have been through so much and I... you remind me of how I used to be before Neil left me. I was vigorous and knew what I wanted out of life. I had the whole world at my feet... but when he left me, I fell apart. I couldn't be that way again because the man that I loved had left me.

(beat)

I know it sounds strange but it would have been better if he'd died. At least then I would have fooled myself into thinking he still loved me. But he didn't and he made it abundantly clear when he didn't come back.

LISA

I'm sorry, Evelyn.

EVELYN

Don't let it get that way, Lisa. Don't let yourself become like me.

LISA

You're not *so* bad.

EVELYN

Lisa. My eldest son got married without even telling me. My daughter went through years of abuse and didn't let me know. And my youngest son was having a relationship with his teacher, then ran away.

LISA

And you're still here... trying to make me feel better.

They stay in the moment for a while until:

LISA (CONT'D)

You want a sandwich?

EVELYN
I'd love one. But use the cheese
slicer.
(jokes)
I don't want a blood sandwich.

Lisa's eyes widen -- thoughtless bitch. She forces a
completely fake smile.

LISA
I'll be right back.

She almost runs for the door.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Lisa SLAMS the door behind her, pulls out a pouch. She
lines her gums with COCAINE before taking deep breaths...
stares into the mirror.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

A second later and Lisa reappears in the kitchen, her
expression calm, all smiles.

LISA
What would you like?

Evelyn smiles back, completely oblivious.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. HUNTER RESTAURANT - DAY

Establishing shot.

INT. HUNTER RESTAURANT

Ally smiles at a customer as she greets and sits them. She approaches ESTEVON.

ALLY
Ever get bored of working here,
Estevon?

ESTEVON
Me? No. I love being a chef.

ALLY
Really?

ESTEVON
Cooking to me is like making
love.

Ally looks blankly at him.

ALLY
You either have really kinky sex
or really strange sex.

ESTEVON
It's all about the passion,
Alison. With cooking... you put
your heart into it, your body
sweats, your hands wander
until...

ALLY
You orgasm?

ESTEVON
Yes.

ALLY
I knew it. Kinky sex.

Estevon is about to say something but is cut off by Ally's stare at the door. Turn to see BRIAN enter. She immediately approaches.

ALLY (CONT'D)
Brian? What are you doing here?

BRIAN
I was passing by and was
distracted by the sudden urge to
eat.

ALLY
Oh. You're hungry.

BRIAN
That is why people come to these
places, isn't it?

ALLY
Yeah. Sure. Here, take a seat.

She motions for him to sit and he does. She passes him a
menu, looks him over. He looks extremely dashing in his
suit and it's not lost on Ally.

BRIAN
I think I'll have the steak. Raw.

ALLY
So you're a red meat kinda guy?

BRIAN
I eat how God intended.

ALLY
Right.

She goes to walk off but:

ALLY (CONT'D)
You know, *some* people might think
you only came here because you
know I work here.

BRIAN
Well, *some* people would be right.

ALLY
They-- what?

BRIAN
If I eat somewhere else, I'm
always wondering what they've
done to the food beforehand. If I
eat here, I know that it's come
from a trusted source.

Ally smiles briefly.

ALLY
(re: Estevon)
Actually, it comes from him.

Brian looks over to Estevon, who peers out from the hole in the wall -- which leads into the kitchen.

Ally grins as she walks away but stops amid hearing a choking sound. She looks to a MAN, who is indeed CHOKING. His WIFE is panicked, arms flailing.

WIFE

Oh my God! Someone help him!

She frantically pats him on the back -- almost as if she were squawking a fly. Brian jumps to his feet and does the Heimlich maneuver.

The wife proceeds to hit Brian.

WIFE (CONT'D)

He's not choking! It's an allergic reaction! You put onion in his food!

She pulls out her cell phone and dials.

WIFE (CONT'D)

I need an ambulance!

As the man wraps his hands over his own throat, trying to breathe, the wife kneels to his side.

Ally turns to Brian.

ALLY

They told me no onion.

BRIAN

They could sue.

(beat)

Lucky I'm a lawyer, huh?

Ally looks to him, nods slightly. Brian flashes a smile -- the man still choking on the ground.

INT. JENSEN & YATES - WARNER'S OFFICE

Lisa sits in a chair, a distant look on her face. WARNER sits opposite with a notepad.

WARNER

So tell me about your mother.

LISA

I'd rather not.

WARNER

Well aren't you here so that you can get everything off your chest?

LISA

I'm here because it seems like the only way to convince my husband I'm not deluded to the fact I'm going insane.

WARNER

They say a crazy person would never admit they were crazy.

LISA

Whoever *they* are, they're idiots. Crazy people know they're crazy. They know their actions and thoughts aren't normal.

WARNER

Then you obviously don't think you're crazy.

LISA

How'd you work that one out?

WARNER

You referred to them in the third person. You don't regard yourself as one of them.

LISA

There are more types of crazy people in the world, Warner. There are people who born with mental problems, who have no choice over the matter. There are those who sink into depression and allow the disease to take them over. And then there is me, who was raised by a crazy bitch, who was brought up in a crazy world, who turned out to be...

WARNER

Crazy?

Lisa nods, sighs.

LISA

I know my thoughts aren't normal and I know some of the things I see aren't normal -- but it doesn't make them any less real.

WARNER

How so?

LISA

Because they are apart of my mind and it's not so much me going insane, it's my brain telling me I need to address the issues I have.

WARNER

So why don't you?

LISA

Because I'm afraid. If I confront them, I acknowledge they're real... and I don't think I'm strong enough for that.

Warner nods slightly, writes something down.

LISA (CONT'D)

My mother-in-law came to see me this morning. She told me how much stronger I was compared to her, how she admired my strength. I wanted to tell her everything, I wanted her to know how wrong she was... but I ended up just agreeing because... because through all her faults and despite the things she's said to me in the past, I still want her to like me.

WARNER

You want her love.

LISA

I guess I do.

WARNER

Why?

LISA

Because... because I've never had a mother who loved me unconditionally before.

She thinks about what she's just said -- as if realizing it for the first time.

EXT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE

Establishing shot.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Della sits on the sofa, watches TV. Theo comes through, sets his briefcase down.

DELLA
You're back early.

THEO
Yeah, I decided to take some time off.

Della turns to him, curious.

THEO (CONT'D)
I think I'm needed more here than at work.

DELLA
And exactly how did you come to that conclusion?

THEO
Mama, you haven't been acting yourself lately.

DELLA
(apathetically)
My husband recently died. Would you like me to break out the champagne?

THEO
Yeah, maybe. Laugh, cry, scream, get drunk... whatever it takes. Just get it out of your system and get over it.

DELLA
Get over it? Get over it?! How dare you.

She rises, steps closer to him. He backs away a little, almost as if he were frightened of her.

DELLA (CONT'D)
How many sacrifices have I made to ensure your happiness? How many times have I had to cover things up for you? And this is how you repay me?

THEO
I j-just think you need some help around here.

DELLA

You *think*? Come on, Theo, we all know thinking isn't your strong point.

THEO

Jarell was crying this morning because of you.

DELLA

Jarell needs to grow up and learn the world doesn't revolve around him.

THEO

He is fourteen years old!

DELLA

And he is my son. You have no right to tell me how to raise him.

THEO

We could see about that, *Mother*.

Della narrows her eyes on him, infuriated, but somehow manages to keep her tone calm.

DELLA

Whatever that is ticking in your brain you might as well forget it, Theo. You are no match for me and if you think for one second you could hurt me and not reap the consequences, you are dearly mistaken.

(beat)

So, you will call your boss and you will tell them you don't need the time off. And I'll make us some lunch.

Della moves into the kitchen. Theo stands, reels from her attack.

INT. HUNTER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Evelyn sits at the table, reads a newspaper. Matt comes through the back door.

EVELYN

Matthew. There's coffee in the pot.

MATT

That's alright, I'm not staying.
I just wanted to come around and
talk.

Evelyn looks up to him.

EVELYN

One of my children wants to talk
to me. Something is very wrong
here.

Matt smiles, sits down.

MATT

It's about the restaurant
actually and... it's pretty
important.

EVELYN

I'm listening.

MATT

Well... I was looking into other
ventures and I saw a nightclub
that was on sale and I... well I
thought I'd take a look and...

EVELYN

You bought it.

MATT

Yeah.

EVELYN

And you're leaving the family
restaurant.

MATT

Yeah.

Matt's eyes lower -- awaits the big speech about how he's
betrayed the family and her.

EVELYN

Good.

MATT

What?

EVELYN

I'm glad you're finally setting
something up for your future.

MATT

Are you serious?

EVELYN

Of course. You're a married man now, Matthew. It's about time you started to provide for Lisa and let's face it, you can't do that while you're working for your own mother.

MATT

I can't believe these words are coming out of your mouth.

EVELYN

People change.

MATT

I guess so.

Matt smiles, taken aback by her calmness.

EVELYN

I went to your apartment and saw Lisa today.

MATT

You did?

EVELYN

I thought it was about time we had a talk.

MATT

What did you say?

EVELYN

I made it clear that no matter what has happened in the past, I am happy she is my daughter-in-law.

A long beat.

MATT

What have you done with my mother?

Evelyn smiles slightly, rolls her eyes. She's about to say something but MARIE comes through the door. She holds a hamper.

MARIE

Evelyn. Get your face on and get those shiny boots of yours walking. We're having a picnic.

EVELYN

A what?

MARIE

You heard me. The sun is shining,
the birds are singing... it's a
perfect day for it.

EVELYN

(re: hamper)
You even made us food.

MARIE

Yes. That is, if by *food* you mean
vast amounts of wine, then yes I
certainly did.

EVELYN

(smiles)
I'll get my bag.

Evelyn leaves the room. Marie takes a seat opposite Matt,
eyes him up.

MARIE

Been working out, Matt?

MATT

Uh --?

MARIE

I can tell. You have nice arms.

Marie continues to gaze at him. Matt shifts a little,
uncomfortable.

EXT. CAFE

Brian and Ally sit outside the cafe at a table, two coffees
in front of them.

ALLY

I feel like such an idiot.

BRIAN

You're not an idiot, Ally. Sure
you almost killed a man, who
hasn't?

ALLY

It's not funny.

BRIAN

Right. Look, we haven't heard
anything from them and the doctor
said he'd just swell a little.

ALLY

So maybe they won't sue.

BRIAN

Oh they'll sue. America is crazy for suing. It's like they think it's going to be some big courtroom drama where the jury goes *ooh* and *aah*.

ALLY

So what do we do?

BRIAN

If and when they contact us, we make a settlement.

ALLY

What? I like my money.

BRIAN

It's either that or drag it through the courts.

ALLY

Can't we just... do whatever you did to the broken nose man? That worked.

Brian thinks on it. He looks at Ally, who sighs, runs her fingers through her hair, clearly troubled.

BRIAN

You know, I think you're right. That could work.

ALLY

Really?

BRIAN

Yeah. I'll try it.

Ally smiles wide, finishes her coffee. She looks at her watch.

ALLY

I should go.

BRIAN

(nods)
I'll let you know of any developments.

ALLY

Alright. And, Brian... thank you, so much.

She kisses him on the cheek. They stay close -- for a moment -- and then Ally walks away. Brian watches her, longingly.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

Evelyn and Marie sit on a blanket on the ground. Each have a glass of wine in hand. They watch the various people go about their business.

MARIE

This was such a good idea of mine. I always have the best ideas.

EVELYN

I can't fault you on that. I wish I'd known in advance, I would have made us some food.

MARIE

Food? Evelyn, we have the wine.
The wine.

They both chuckle.

EVELYN

I don't know how I would have gotten through these past few weeks without you, Marie.

MARIE

You know, it's funny, everyone says that. I must be a beautiful person both on the inside and out.

EVELYN

I'm being serious, Marie. You're my rock.

MARIE

Thank you. But what about Tom? Where does he fit in?

EVELYN

He's just a...

MARIE

Fuck buddy?

EVELYN

No. A friend. He's just a friend.

MARIE

That's what they all say, Evy, and before you know it you're in a public cubicle with your pants around your ankles.

EVELYN
You are terrible.

MARIE
I'm just saying it how it is --

She stops upon seeing Evelyn's gaze. On a park bench sits Scott and someone who looks a lot like Christian. The "someone" walks away, disappears around a corner.

Evelyn jumps to her feet, quickly rushes to Scott, who almost screams when she grabs him.

EVELYN
Was that Christian?

SCOTT
Wha --?

EVELYN
Was that Christian?!

SCOTT
Yes! Let me go!

Marie, who has gathered the wine and left the hamper, quickly approaches -- still sipping her glass.

MARIE
What's going on?

EVELYN
Christian's here.

Marie looks Scott over.

MARIE
Honey, I don't know what medication you're on but this is not Christian.

EVELYN
Not him.
(to Scott)
Where did he go?

SCOTT
He... he just went to get some food.

EVELYN
Where from?

SCOTT
The burger joint. Mrs Hunter --?

Too late. Evelyn has rushed off. Marie hangs back for a moment.

MARIE

You should have told Evelyn her son was back. Do you know how worried she has been? Someone should slap you for what you've done.

A long beat. Marie SLAPS him across the face -- sheer annoyance in her eyes.

SCOTT

Ow!

Scott feels his face. Marie is instantly apologetic.

MARIE

Oh I'm so sorry. I got caught up in the moment and...

(beat)

Evelyn!

Marie runs off after Evelyn. Scott watches her go, completely stunned.

EXT. STREETS

Evelyn rounds the corner, looks among the various crowds of people. She turns to the other side of the road, where she sees Christian with his burger.

Christian spots her, his eyes wide. They both freeze. Then Christian drops the burger and runs up the sidewalk.

EVELYN

Christian!

Evelyn, without even thinking, runs across the road. Cars BEEP their horns as they come to a sudden stop but she doesn't care. She chases her son up the sidewalk.

A few seconds later, Marie does the same. She weaves her way in and out of the cars.

MARIE

(to drivers)

Sorry. Thank you. Sorry.

Marie runs as fast as she can, then stops upon seeing the burger on the sidewalk. She picks it up and throws it in the bin before continuing on her chase.

She rounds another corner where she sees Evelyn standing. She approaches, catches her breath.

MARIE
Where is he?

EVELYN
I don't know. I lost him.

Marie sighs, swigs her wine, then spots Christian getting into a taxi cab.

MARIE
There!

Evelyn instantly rushes up the sidewalk as the cab pulls away. She flags another taxi.

EVELYN
Follow that cab!

Evelyn gets in as the cab drives away. Marie rushes up to where it was, sighs, having been left behind. She walks up to some steps outside a store and takes a seat, swigs some more wine.

A passerby drops some coins beside her. She looks at him with narrow eyes.

MARIE
I'm not homeless!

The man continues on his way. Marie slips the coins in her pocket.

INT. TAXI CAB

The driver in the front, Evelyn in the back. She's on the edge of the seat.

EVELYN
Go faster!

DRIVER
I can't.

EVELYN
Then I'll drive!

DRIVER
Lady, you are not driving my cab now sit back and put on your seat belt.

EVELYN
Young man, you drive faster or I'll bite your ear.

The driver looks around, annoyed at her.

DRIVER
If I have to tell you --

EVELYN
Look out!

The driver turns back as the cab SMASHES into the car in front. A moment before Evelyn realizes the car in front is a cab.

EXT. STREETS

Evelyn dashes to the cab in front and pulls the door open... but Christian's isn't there. She looks around -- he isn't anywhere in sight. She hangs her head, fights back the tears.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. WASHINGTON AVENUE - MORNING

Della comes out of the house, collects the mail. She looks to the Hunter household, gazes for a moment, before re-entering her home.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - THEO'S ROOM

The sun creeps through the curtains as Theo and Nateisha lie awake in bed.

NATEISHA

Theo. We should find our own place.

THEO

What?

NATEISHA

I don't wanna be here anymore. We shouldn't have to live in some place where we have to tiptoe around someone.

THEO

We can't leave yet.

NATEISHA

Theo --!

THEO

I'm serious.

NATEISHA

And so am I. God, your mother treats you like shit and you just take it.

THEO

What other option do I have?

NATEISHA

Stand up for yourself.

THEO

And then she'll... we should just keep our calm about this.

NATEISHA

We're supposed to be starting our own family.

THEO

Excuse me?

NATEISHA

I don't mean right now, Theo. I just mean... we should be preparing for our lives together. Not taking care of your ungrateful mother.

THEO

It's not just about her. It's Jarell too.

NATEISHA

We're staying here because of your little brother?

THEO

I can't leave him here with her while she's like this.

NATEISHA

What is it with you? Why do you always need to be taking care of someone?

THEO

It's my job.

NATEISHA

No. Your job is to my husband.

THEO

And I am.

Nateisha is about to say something but stops, coming to a realization.

NATEISHA

This isn't about them, is it?

THEO

What?

NATEISHA

I know why you don't wanna leave. It's because you think once we get our own place, I'll make you have a baby with me.

THEO

Don't be stupid.

NATEISHA

Don't call me stupid! I know what's going on.

THEO

You've got it wrong --!

NATEISHA

You're a coward, Theo. And right now I'm thinking you wanna go to work.

Theo looks at her deadly serious expression. He shakes his head, sighs, and gets out of bed. Nateisha stares at him -- cold.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Pan the room until we come across Matt and Lisa, having sex. They moan and groan, bodies grind. Lisa's nails claw his back. Matt's eyes slam tight until... orgasm. A long moment as they both catch their breaths.

Matt rolls over, a big happy on his face. Lisa kisses him on his chest.

LISA

This is how every morning should be.

Matt nods slightly, too exhausted to properly lift his head.

LISA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna take a shower.

She kisses him again before entering the bathroom. Matt waits a moment, eyes the bathroom door. A grin comes over his face as he gets an idea. He gets up, naked as the day he was born, and creeps towards the bathroom.

MATT

Hey. How about we shower together?

He opens the door -- to see Lisa lining her gums with cocaine. His face drops. Lisa looks at him, realizes she's been caught red handed.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Lisa comes through. Matt follows, both fully dressed.

LISA

I don't see what the big deal is. You do it!

MATT

In moderation, Lisa. You've got enough coke to last you a month!

LISA

Exactly. It's to last me a month. Or two.

Matt narrows his eyes on her -- he doesn't buy it.

LISA (CONT'D)

Fine. So I've been using it a bit. A lot. Whatever.

MATT

Whatever? Lisa... I think you have a problem.

LISA

Yeah. At the moment, it's you.

MATT

Why do you always attack?

LISA

Look, my drugs are my business. It's nothing to do with you.

MATT

I'm your husband!

LISA

Only when you want to be!

MATT

What does that mean?

Lisa hesitates before:

LISA

You've been off building up your nightclub, seeing your family, being anywhere but with me.

MATT

That's not true.

LISA

Yes it is, Matt, and you know it! It's been going on for weeks now. You avoid me at every chance you get.

MATT

I'm not avoiding you, Lisa. I love you.

LISA

I believe you... but it doesn't change the fact you can't stand to be around me, that you're scared I might be losing my mind.

MATT

(beat)

Can you blame me?

LISA

What?

MATT

I didn't ask for this, Lisa. I didn't ask for any of it. But I've been there for you, every step of the way... and you just push me away.

LISA

I don't --!

MATT

You don't want me around, you never have.

LISA

I married you, didn't I?

MATT

And I've been asking myself why ever since. This isn't a marriage, Lisa. It's like we're in our own show only you have to be the main star all the time.

LISA

Are you saying I'm faking the whole thing? That I'm pretending I'm...?

MATT

I'm not saying that. It's just... all we do, all we talk about, has something that revolves around you. You never ask how I'm feeling, you never stop to consider that your actions effect me in a *big* way.

LISA

Well I'm sorry for upsetting you, Matthew, but I'm going through something at the moment and I don't have time to worry about you as well.

MATT

That's exactly what I'm getting about.

Lisa sighs, shakes her head.

LISA

I'm sorry for... but, Matt, I don't know how to deal with everything. It's like I'm slowly being suffocated and I can't catch my breath.

MATT

So let me help you. Don't push me away anymore.

Lisa nods, her eyes well with tears. Matt wraps his arms around her. He lets out a deep sigh.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Scott and Christian have their breakfast. JANETTE comes through, grabs her car keys.

JANETTE

Right, kids. I'm off to work. Scott, make sure you get to school.

Scott nods as she exits the house. He turns to Christian, grins.

SCOTT

I'm thinking I'll skip school.

CHRISTIAN

Hm?

SCOTT

Gives you and me some time alone.

CHRISTIAN

Alright.

Scott notices his distraction.

SCOTT

What's wrong?

CHRISTIAN

Nothing.

SCOTT

Come on, Chris. You can tell me.

CHRISTIAN

It's just... seeing my mom
yesterday... I wasn't prepared
for it.

SCOTT

You had to see her some time.

CHRISTIAN

I know but... she looked so
determined like, she actually
wanted to see me.

SCOTT

Chris, are you completely dumb?
Of course she wants to see you,
she's your mom!

CHRISTIAN

I just didn't think she would...
not after what happened.

SCOTT

So she reacted badly to you being
gay. Give her a break, man. She
ain't perfect.

CHRISTIAN

I know. I was just surprised.

SCOTT

By seeing her?

CHRISTIAN

Not just that. I was surprised
cos my initial reaction was to
run to her, not from her.

Scott rests his hand on Christian's.

SCOTT

Maybe you should go see her?

CHRISTIAN

No way. I'm not ready for that.

Scott nods in understanding.

SCOTT

Speaking of being ready...

CHRISTIAN

(eyes him)
Are you saying --?

SCOTT
 (nods)
 I'm saying.

CHRISTIAN
 Are you sure?

SCOTT
 Will you just take me to the
 bedroom already?

Christian smiles wide as he takes his hand, leads him out of the room.

INT. HUNTER RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Evelyn sits at the table, eats her cereal. Ally comes through, makes a coffee.

ALLY
 I didn't see you last night.

EVELYN
 I went to Marie's house after
 seeing Christian in the park.

Ally almost drops her mug.

ALLY
 What?

EVELYN
 Yes. I chased him and he got
 away.

ALLY
 Was he okay? I mean, did he look
 alright? Was he --?

EVELYN
 He looked fine, Ally. There's no
 need to worry.

ALLY
 Why are you so calm about this?
 You should be dragging his ass
 home.

EVELYN
 No.

ALLY
No?

EVELYN

Ally, I don't need to. My concern was that he wasn't alright, that he was hungry or poor or in danger... I know that's not true now. I know he's okay.

ALLY

But --?

EVELYN

It was you who told me to stop interfering, to let you kids lead your own lives and that's exactly what I plan to do.

Ally takes a seat, holds her mom's hands.

ALLY

Mom, normally, I'd completely agree and tell you you've really grown as a person. But this is your youngest son. It is your right and duty to go out there and bring him home.

A beat.

EVELYN

Oh thank God! I'll be back soon!

Evelyn rushes out of the door at the speed of light. Ally watches her go, smiles. Her cell phone rings.

ALLY

Hello?
 (listens)
 Brian, hey.
 (listens)
 Uh, sure. I'll be there as soon as possible.
 (listens)
 See you then.

CLICK! She hangs up the phone.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM

Della sits at the table, reads a book. Nateisha comes through, narrows her eyes on her, takes a seat opposite. Della looks at her, puts her book down.

DELLA

Something bothering you, Nateisha?

NATEISHA

Actually, there is. You.

DELLA

(smiles)

What exactly have I done?

NATEISHA

Well, before I begin, I'd like to make something abundantly clear.

NATEISHA (CONT'D)

I am not scared of you, Della, so your little mind games won't work on me. Nor do I buy this cold as ice front you put on.

Della cocks a brow, clearly intrigued.

NATEISHA (CONT'D)

I know your husband died but that was two months ago. Get over it already cos to be perfectly honest with you, it's getting real old, real quick. Not only that, but you are a mother. You have a responsibility to your son and don't think I won't make sure you carry them out because if you so much as say an unsuitable word to him, I'll call social services and report you.

Della's nostrils flare, her eyes narrow, her teeth grind -- she is not a happy bunny.

NATEISHA (CONT'D)

You are interfering with my marriage to Theo and it's about time something was done about it. I want you to tell him to leave, that you don't want us living her anymore. You will tell him this, otherwise there's no telling what might happen.

A long beat. Nateisha rises, confident that she has done what she came to do, and heads to the door. Della calms herself, then:

DELLA

I'm glad we're being perfectly honest with each other, Nateisha. In fact, I think we should always be this honest.

DELLA (CONT'D)
I wonder if we should let Theo
into some of the secrets we know?

Nateisha's eyes flicker.

DELLA (CONT'D)
Or maybe I should let you in on
some of Theo's deepest secrets.

NATEISHA
Theo has no secrets.

Della only smirks, shakes her head.

DELLA
You think you know your husband,
Nateisha? No wife ever knows
anything about their husbands,
it's the way the world works.

NATEISHA
Theo doesn't lie to me.

DELLA
I'm not saying he lies. But there
are things you know nothing
about, things that would destroy
you.

NATEISHA
You're bluffing.

Della rises, edges closer to her.

DELLA
I am not your enemy, Nateisha. I
am your mother-in-law. But let *me*
be clear about something. If you
try and damage my relationship
with either of my children, I
will destroy you. I will take
everything you have away from you
in a blink of an eye. I will make
you wish you had never known me
and if you doubt I'm being
serious, just ask Theo about
Rachelle.

(beat)
Be very careful, Nateisha. You
are skating on extremely thin
ice.

And with that, Della walks out of the room, leaving
Nateisha almost trembling.

EXT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - DAY

A car pulls up outside the house. Evelyn gets out and walks up the path. She KNOCKS on the door but there's no answer. She KNOCKS again. Still, no answer.

She turns the door knob and pushes. The door opens. Evelyn thinks about it for a moment, then enters the house.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Evelyn comes through, looks around, there's nobody there. She proceeds through into...

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Evelyn sees two empty bowls of cereal on the table. She goes to them, looks them over.

EVELYN
Christian?

She continues into...

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - FRONT HALL

Evelyn looks around, the place looks empty. BANG! She instantly looks up the stairs where the noise came from. She walks up.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - HALL LANDING

Evelyn reaches the top of the stairs, hears faint noises coming from within a room. She walks towards it slowly, listening attentively.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - SCOTT'S ROOM

Scott is on his stomach on the bed, Christian on top of him, between his legs. He moves up and down, letting out slight groans. His lips curved into a smile, enjoying every bit of it.

Scott's eyes are closed, his face contorted a little -- slightly uncomfortable with every thrust. As Christian reaches his climax...

The door opens to reveal Evelyn. She gasps at the sight, covers her mouth with her hand. Christian and Scott dive under the covers.

CHRISTIAN

What are you doing here?!

EVELYN

We need to talk.

Christian and Scott exchange horrified looks.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

I'll be outside. You two take
your time.

Evelyn closes the door behind her. Christian and Scott watch her go, speechless.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - DAY

Establishing shot.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Evelyn is washing up the dirty dishes. Christian comes through, dressed, a little embarrassed.

CHRISTIAN

You can't just let yourself in to
people's homes.

Evelyn turns to him. She doesn't say anything to begin with, she just looks him over, a smile forms.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

What?

EVELYN

You have no idea how good it is
to see you, Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah? I didn't think you wanted
to see me again.

EVELYN

I was wrong and I made a
mistake... and I'm so sorry.

CHRISTIAN

You reported James to the police,
Mom. You hated me *that* much?

EVELYN

I don't hate you. I could never
hate you, Christian. But I was
scared.

CHRISTIAN

Of what? Me being gay?

EVELYN

No. I was scared that he had
taken advantage of you, that you
were too young to take care of
yourself.

CHRISTIAN

You were wrong.

EVELYN

I know that now. I know you're capable... and I'm proud that my son can stand on his own two feet.

Christian lets his stance slip.

CHRISTIAN

You don't care I'm gay?

EVELYN

Yes. I do. It frightens me a little.

CHRISTIAN

Why?

EVELYN

Because I haven't prepared you for the world, Christian. And if I had known you were going to be gay, I would have tried to help you with the world you were going to face.

CHRISTIAN

You can't do that. You can't prepare me for being gay. It's not how it works.

EVELYN

I'm your mother. My job is to build you up and send you into the world. I couldn't... I failed.

Evelyn fights the tears. Christian edges closer.

CHRISTIAN

You didn't fail. Mom, I took off and survived pretty well without you... without Matt or Ally, my friends... I did that. And I guess I was only able to do it cos you taught me how to survive in the world.

Evelyn smiles a little.

EVELYN

When I saw you and... James... I was surprised. I didn't hate the fact that you were gay but I hated that you hid it from me, that you couldn't bare to bring yourself to tell me.

CHRISTIAN

It's not just you, Mom. No kid can tell their parents they're gay straight away. It's something you need to get used to yourself before anyone else can try to help.

EVELYN

Christian... I'm sorry you had to go through all that without anyone.

CHRISTIAN

I had James.

Evelyn nods, understands. She looks to the door to see Scott standing there. Christian turns around, sees him.

EVELYN

I should go home. I have to make dinner and tidy up and...

(beat)

It would be nice if... well, I should go.

She takes a lasting look at Christian before leaving the room. Christian watches her go. Scott looks to Christian, a realization coming over him.

INT. KRAINE AND WEST - BRIAN'S OFFICE

Ally enters, looks to Brian sitting in his chair. She looks to the desk, sees a meal and wine.

ALLY

What --?

BRIAN

Take a seat.

She eyes him, the food, sits down.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Mr and Mrs Davidson have decided not to sue you or the restaurant.

ALLY

That's the best news I've heard all day. What happened?

Brian eyes his check book, shrugs.

BRIAN

I guess they're not like the other ninety-nine percent of Americans.

ALLY

Lucky for me.

(beat)

So, this food...?

BRIAN

Oh, didn't I tell you? We're on a date.

ALLY

A date?

BRIAN

Yes. I thought it was about time. Beautiful woman, handsome man. It's like a match made in heaven.

Ally lets out a laugh, a little taken aback. He pours her a glass of wine.

ALLY

I thought when we went on our first date, it would be somewhere other than your office.

BRIAN

So you did know we would go on a date.

ALLY

I didn't mean... fine, so I thought about it. That doesn't mean I wanted to.

BRIAN

Ally, I know you've been through some things lately. Life's dealt you a bad hand. But you don't have to let it be like that all the time. You can take it into your own hands, live your life the way you want to.

ALLY

It's not as simple as that, Brian.

BRIAN

I know. You were in love with a man who died almost two months ago.

ALLY

That's the short version.

BRIAN

Tell me about Connor.

ALLY

That's not normally something a man requests on a first date.

BRIAN

I lied. This isn't our first date. It's a pre-date.

ALLY

A pre-date?

BRIAN

So about Connor...?

ALLY

He was... perfect. He was the one who gave me the courage to leave Michael. He made me feel... special, like I was the only one in the world that mattered to him. It was the first time I'd ever felt like that.

Brian nods in understanding. He raises his glass.

BRIAN

To Connor.

Ally smiles, raises hers too.

ALLY

To Connor.

They cheers, sip their wine. Ally looks Brian over and smiles again.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - KITCHEN

Nateisha enters with Theo following.

NATEISHA

She practically threatened me, Theo.

THEO

I know but --

NATEISHA

No! I am not gonna stay here when she is trying to come between us.

THEO
She said that?

NATEISHA
It was pretty clear from what I got that she would do anything to split us up if I so much as said something she didn't like.

THEO
Nat --?

NATEISHA
Who's Rachelle?

Theo instantly reacts to the name.

THEO
What?

NATEISHA
She mentioned Rachelle, told me to ask you about her.

THEO
I-I don't know a Rachelle.

Nateisha stares him down. Theo doesn't break but he avoids eye contact.

NATEISHA
Then what is she talking about?

THEO
I have no idea. Look, I'll talk to her.

NATEISHA
Yeah, cos that worked so well last time!

She exits the room. Jarell enters.

JARELL
Are you and Nateisha gonna split up?

THEO
Wha --? No, of course not.

JARELL
Then why were you fighting?

THEO
It's nothing, Jarell.

JARELL
 Everyone's been fighting since
 Dad died.

Theo kneels down.

THEO
 Listen, things are gonna get back
 to normal soon okay? I'll make
 sure they do.

Jarell nods, not completely convinced. Theo pulls him close
 and hugs him.

EXT. LISA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Establishing shot.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT - LOUNGE

Matt sits on the sofa, watches TV. Lisa comes through with
 a box. She sits down, passes it to him.

MATT
 What's this?

LISA
 That's everything I've got. If
 you think using is bad for me,
 then I won't do it anymore.

MATT
 Lisa... I don't want to force you
 into doing anything you don't
 want to do.

LISA
 You're not. Sometimes I just need
 a wake up call.

Matt smiles.

LISA (CONT'D)
 I thought the only thing that
 could get me through the day was
 drugs... and that's not gonna
 make me better, is it?

MATT
 No.

LISA
 And before anyone else can help
 me get over this, I need to help
 myself.

Matt leans in, kisses her on the cheek.

LISA (CONT'D)
What was that for?

MATT
For being you.

Lisa kisses him.

MATT (CONT'D)
And what was that for?

LISA
For helping me, even when I make
it hard for you. You never give
up. You always have faith in me.

MATT
And I always will.

He wraps his arms around her as they fall back on the sofa,
kissing, hugging.

INT. HUNTER RESTAURANT

Evelyn enters the closed restaurant. She finds Estevon
cleaning up.

EVELYN
Estevon.

ESTEVON
Evelyn, it's so good to see you.

EVELYN
Thank you. Where's Ally?

ESTEVON
She didn't come in today.

EVELYN
Really? Who looked after the
place?

ESTEVON
I did.

EVELYN
Estevon, you should have called
me.

ESTEVON
I managed.

Evelyn smiles.

ESTEVON

I haven't seen you smile like
that the whole time I've known
you.

EVELYN

I guess I didn't have a reason
before.

ESTEVON

And now...?

EVELYN

I spoke to my son.

ESTEVON

The one missing?

EVELYN

Yes. He's back in town.

ESTEVON

Evelyn, that is...

He trails off, quickly grabs a bottle of wine.

ESTEVON (CONT'D)

We must celebrate.

EVELYN

No, I shouldn't --

ESTEVON

I won't take no for an answer.

He flashes a smile. Evelyn shrugs -- why not? -- and grabs
a glass of wine. The two exchange brief looks.

INT. SANDERS RESIDENCE - SCOTT'S ROOM

Scott sits on the bed as Christian comes through, wet hair,
a towel wrapped around his waist.

CHRISTIAN

Hey.

SCOTT

Hey.

Christian moves closer, goes to kiss him, but Scott turns
away.

CHRISTIAN

What's wrong?

SCOTT

Nothing.

CHRISTIAN

Scott...

SCOTT

You'll never love me, Christian.
Not the way you should anyway.

CHRISTIAN

What?

SCOTT

You still love James.

CHRISTIAN

Don't be stupid.

SCOTT

I'm not. You told your mom you
had James when you needed someone
the most.

CHRISTIAN

And I wasn't lying but that
doesn't mean I still love him.

SCOTT

He was there for you, he gave you
the strength you have today. I
could never compare to that.

CHRISTIAN

Scott, I'm not comparing.

SCOTT

Well I am. I don't even know
if... we could be together.

CHRISTIAN

Are you serious? What have we
been doing the past week then?

SCOTT

I don't know! I just know that...
we shouldn't be together. I don't
want to just be filler until
James comes back.

CHRISTIAN

He's not coming back.

SCOTT

Whatever!

Christian looks to Scott, grabs his clothes and starts getting dressed.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Are you going somewhere?

CHRISTIAN
Yeah.

SCOTT
You can still stay here, Chris.
We're still friends.

CHRISTIAN
No. I can't stay here.

SCOTT
Look... maybe I'm wrong, maybe we
can...

Scott rises, grabs Christian but he shrugs him off,.

CHRISTIAN
Scott, you're right. I know it. I
didn't wanna accept it but...
when we... it wasn't the same.

Scott takes it in -- shakes his head. Christian moves in,
kisses him.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
It's time I stopped running from
things.

SCOTT
Where will you go?

CHRISTIAN
Home.

Christian kisses him again, grabs his bag, and walks out of
the room. Scott watches him go, falls back on the bed.

INT. JOHNSON RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Della sits on the couch. Theo enters, approaches her, he's
pretty pissed.

DELLA
Good day at work?

THEO
What are you doing talking about
Rachelle to Nateisha?

DELLA
I see she told you about our
little discussion.

THEO
You have no right.

DELLA
I have every right.

THEO
I won't have you mess things up
for me, *Mother*.

DELLA
Oh, Theo. You're so very cute
when you're angry.

THEO
Don't. I've had enough. This ends
now.

DELLA
And what are you going to do?

THEO
I'm going to tell the truth.

Theo starts off but Della quickly rises.

DELLA
Stop.

Theo turns around.

THEO
Why should I?

DELLA
(beat)
Because if you do, we will both
go to prison.

THEO
If it means this will stop, I'll
do it.

DELLA
Theo... please. Don't.

He thinks on this, sees how desperate she is -- for the
first time, she looks helpless.

THEO
Things are going to change around
here. It'll start by you
apologizing to Nateisha.

DELLA

Fine.

THEO

And from now on, you start
treating Jarell how he deserves.

Della nods. Theo looks her over one more time before
leaving the room. Della sighs deeply.

INT. HUNTER RESIDENCE - LOUNGE

Evelyn comes in with a slight smile on her face. She goes
to the light switch but there's a KNOCK at the door. She
opens it to reveal Christian.

A long beat.

CHRISTIAN

I need you to know I'm not here
because it's a last resort. I'm
here cos I want to be and I want
to try and make things right. I
don't know how and it'll take
some time but --

Evelyn cuts him off with an embrace. Christian doesn't know
how to react but after a moment, he accepts it, rests his
head on her shoulders.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW