

UNTITLED MEGACHURCH PROJECT

Written by

Julian Breece

October 28, 2015

SECOND NETWORK DRAFT (revised)

FADE IN:

A female GOSPEL SINGER spotlighted against darkness. She's belting out a soul-stirring contemporary gospel song. Her performance is raw, improvisational, breathtaking.

CHYRON: HOUSTON, TEXAS

LANGSTON (PRE-LAP)

People go to church on Sundays to be inspired. To feel connected to a higher force...

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - CONTROL ROOM - DAY

LANGSTON HOLLOWAY (28, black) watches the singer on four monitors manned by A/V ENGINEERS. We realize that this isn't just a performance, it's live TV, and Langston is the producer. Exacting. High strung. Calling the shots.

LANGSTON

People come to *this* church for that and something extra. They want spectacle. Excitement. Theater. And, gentlemen, it's our job to give the people what they tithe for...

At the perfect moment, when the singer's voice crescendos to a riveting high note, Langston signals to his engineer--

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Lights.

INT. SANCTUARY - SAME

HOUSE LIGHTS GO UP TO REVEAL:

A FORTY-MEMBER GOSPEL CHOIR accompanied by a FULL BAND. As they break into a joyful, bass-heavy version of the song --

THE CAMERA SWEEPS OVER ten thousand CHURCHGOERS packed into a mega-sized version of a traditional worship hall -- floor-to-ceiling stained glass, steepled columns, golden arches -- but with stadium seating and two jumbo projection screens. MORE LIGHTS beam down on a stream of LITURGICAL DANCERS, spinning and leaping down the aisles.

KHALIL WALLACE (28, animated, boyishly handsome) goes into a Kirk Franklin-style call-and-response with the audience that sends them into a frenzy. The congregation is on its feet, clapping and singing. The scene looks more like an R&B concert than a worship service, and the show has just begun.

ON - LANGSTON, taking in the spectacle he's choreographed. Smiling, satisfied.

LANGSTON

Look at God.

MUSIC CONTINUES as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

A WHITE VAN cruises into the shot. We SEE a banner across the side that reads: "GARY'S INDUSTRIAL CLEANING."

CHYRON: MALIBU, CALIFORNIA

INT./EXT. VAN / SECURITY BOOTH - DAY

MALCOLM WALKER (28, black, attractive, dangerously charismatic), is driving with JOSE ROBLES (30s, Latino) riding shotgun. They have on matching uniforms and caps.

The SECURITY GUARD (30s, white, linebacker-built) steps out of the booth and slowly approaches the van.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

You must be the new guy. Sam, right?

SECURITY GUARD

Yeah. How can I help you fellas?

MALCOLM

We're here to clean the resin pipes in the service garage.

SECURITY GUARD

On Sunday?

MALCOLM

Your facilities guy thought it'd be the best option since the technicians are off this morning.

(then, noticing something)

You have a girl?

The guard turns and acknowledges the CRAYON DRAWING in his booth.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Saving up for college? If so, I got four words for you: Interest bearing savings accounts. I got two going at the same time for my twins. You on shift in a couple hours?

SECURITY GUARD

Should be.

MALCOLM

I'm gonna tell you about it. Save you
at least thirty grand.

SECURITY GUARD

Awesome. Hang on, lemme open up the
gate.

The guard opens it with a smile. Malcolm drives into the --
SERVICE GARAGE

Parks. Jose laughs.

JOSE

Twins? Seriously?

MALCOLM

I like to fully commit to the role.

Malcolm and Jose pull ski masks over their faces and we
quickly realize they're here to rob the place. Malcolm opens
his door. Jose, suddenly nervous, hesitates.

JOSE

You think this is gonna work?

MALCOLM

You know a better way to come up with
three hundred grand in two weeks?

Jose shakes his head, no. Malcolm climbs out.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Then let's hope we still got it.

LANGSTON (PRE-LAP)

We are sixty seconds to intros...

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - BACKSTAGE - DAY

SIDNEY HOLLOWAY (26, black) is praying and clutching her
diamond-encrusted cross while a FLOOR PRODUCER connects her
headset mic. A new-school Southern belle, Sidney is beautiful
and poised but unafraid to speak her mind.

Over the producer's WALKIE-TALKIE we HEAR:

LANGSTON (V.O.)

Is Reverend Dog Breath on her mark?

Sidney's eyes snap open at the insult. She braces. Prepared to
let it go. Then --

LANGSTON (V.O.)
 Also known as Reverend Ashy Lips, Clown
 Nose, Hobbit Feet, Man Hands--

Sidney takes the producer's walkie:

SIDNEY
 Why are you such a loser?

INTERCUT CONTROL ROOM/BACKSTAGE:

LANGSTON
 Oh, hi Sidney. How's my favorite
 sister?

SIDNEY
 I will not let you drag me into the
 gutter. Why? Because I'm saved. But if
 I wasn't saved I'd tell you that you
 have the perfect face for off-camera
 work. You look like a barbecue frog
 with a girl butt, jacked up toes and I
 pray for your unborn children.

LANGSTON
 I knew you loved me. By the way, you
 only have two minutes for the pastor's
 intro.

SIDNEY
 You might want to find the pastor
 first.

LANGSTON
 Dad's not back there?

SIDNEY
 No. He didn't even make it to Hair and
 Make-up.

An engineer signals to Langston. He snaps back into action.

LANGSTON
 Sidney, you're on in 5, 4, 3...

Sidney hands the FLOOR PRODUCER his walkie and jogs onto the --

SANCTUARY STAGE

Sidney dances to the center of the stage, SINGING and
 ADLIBBING along with the choir. Her voice is untrained, but
 rich and effortlessly soulful. The crowd goes crazy for her.

INT. SERVICE GARAGE RAMP - DAY

Malcolm is dialing a security code into a keypad. As the gate rises, he and Jose step into --

INT. PORSCHE SHOWROOM - CONTINUOUS

TWELVE NEW MODEL PORSCHEs surrounded by glass-paneled walls.

MALCOLM
Don't be distracted by the shiny
objects.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

The song ends. The band segues into a soft instrumental. Sidney steps forward and speaks to the crowd.

SIDNEY
Good morning, New Light!

The crowd ROARS back in response.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)
This morning I have the privilege of
introducing you to the man who you've
all come to see...

LANGSTON (PRE-LAP)
(panicking)
Mom, Code Orange. You have to find Dad.

INTO. DRESSING ROOM - DAY

GENIE HOLLOWAY, the stunning and formidable First Lady, is listening to Langston on her CELL while her GLAM SQUAD fusses over her flawless hair and elegant Michael Kors sheath.

LANGSTON (O.S.)
... He has to plug his new book at the
end of the sermon or we'll be in breach
with the publisher, which means he
can't go long...

GENIE
Langston, calm down. I'll find him.

INT. PORSCHE SHOWROOM - DAY

Malcolm punches another code. CLACK. A door unlatches. Jose cracks a LOCKBOX with his crowbar. Malcolm grabs two FOB KEYS hanging there, tosses one to Jose. Then they're off, rushing to their respective cars when --

AN ALARM BLARES. Malcolm looks down: LASER TRIP WIRE is criss-crossed over his feet.

MALCOLM

Shit...

RED EMERGENCY LIGHTS FLASH. Malcolm looks and sees that the garage gate is still open. Turns to Jose and yells --

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Move!

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - ABRAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Genie enters the office, a shrine to Abram's career accomplishments. The walls are lined with plaques, speaking tour posters, and photos with world leaders and celebrities.

GENIE

(calling out)

Abram?

Genie walks to the back of the office and pushes through a door that opens onto a --

EXT. GARDEN TERRACE - DAY

A placid Chinese garden. Genie rounds the corner to find --

ABRAM HOLLOWAY (50s, black) standing at the railing, still, contemplative, staring out over the Houston skyline.

GENIE

If you don't get on stage now your son's going to have a heart attack.

Abram turns to Genie and flashes a thousand megawatt smile.

GENIE (CONT'D)

Let's go.

Genie takes Abram's hand, but he just tugs her back to him. Pulls Genie into a passionate kiss. Genie moves back, peers at Abram, confused.

GENIE (CONT'D)

What's gotten into you this morning?

Abram pushes Genie's hair behind her ear. Studies her face as if he's seeing it for the first time.

ABRAM

Let's walk on stage together.

Genie smiles and nods agreement but her eyes betray concern.

INT. PORSCHE SHOWROOM - DAY

Malcolm revs the engine and hits the gas, whipping his car around. The security guard runs into the room SHOUTING, frantic, pulls his gun.

Malcolm sees the Service Garage gate closing. Realizes he won't make it. Malcolm swerves back to face the windows, then meets eyes with Jose. They both know what to do.

In unison, Malcolm and Jose's tires SCREAM in REVERSE, then fly forward, CRASHING through the showroom glass. The guard fires off SHOTS. Both cars land on an empty street. Malcolm spins out, regains control, and SCREECHES up the block.

INT. SANCTUARY - DAY

Abram and Genie are on stage, hand-in-hand, taking in the crowd's adoration. Abram kisses Genie, and she takes her seat in the front row. The TELEPROMPTER is SCROLLING but Abram ignores it. For several moments he paces, deep in thought. Then he stops. Looks out at his congregation.

ABRAM

The teleprompter is "prompting" me to plug my new book. But we're not doing that today.

INTERCUT CONTROL ROOM/SANCTUARY:

LANGSTON

(head exploding)
We're not? What?

ABRAM

Because today I need to confess something to all of you. I need to come clean, New Light, and let you know that the man standing before you is a charlatan, a fake, a fraud...

The crowd gasps and rumbles with confusion. Concerned, Sidney looks down at Genie who fights to maintain a smile.

ABRAM (CONT'D)

For decades, I've preached the gospel of personal empowerment, individual success and material wealth. But then it happened. Ferguson happened. Then Baltimore. Then Charleston. Stories of injustice that shocked the world. But know what? They didn't shock me. Because the same battles are being waged right here in Houston. I'd just turned a blind eye.

(MORE)

ABRAM (CONT'D)

I ignored the inferno raging through our communities even though that wildfire of truth's been chasing me down for years...

I/E. PORSCHE/CANYON - DAY

Two police cars chase Malcolm up a dangerously serpentine canyon road.

ABRAM (V.O.)

...But, New Light, today is the day that I stop running.

INT. SANCTUARY - DAY

The audience has fallen silent. We can't tell if they're traumatized or entranced. But what's certain is that Abram's energy, his voice, his magnetism have permeated every inch of this colossal space.

ABRAM

The Lord spoke to me a few months ago. He said it's time for the church to return to its rightful place in our communities. He said it's time for the faithful to holler at the top of their lungs for those who've been unjustly silenced. To rise up for the ones who've been maimed in the streets and beaten to their knees.

SHOUTS of agreement from the congregation as Abram storms from one side of the stage to the other. But then he stops. Wipes away sweat with a towel. Breathes.

ABRAM (CONT'D)

Houston, we have always had a problem. And today I'm turning this ship around. Because if we do this properly it won't just spell redemption for one man...

I/E. PORSCHE/CANYON - DAY

Malcolm's car races uphill toward an intersection, but out of nowhere, new patrols speed into his path. Create a roadblock.

ABRAM (V.O.)

It'll be a tide of deliverance bathing over all of us. It'll heal what's long been broken, and wash us clean.

Malcolm slams the brakes and dives out of his car. He heads off on foot into the canyon... running... doesn't look back.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

LATER THAT NIGHT. Genie, Langston and Sidney are sitting at the table, waiting to eat Sunday dinner.

LANGSTON

You never mix church and politics. What was he thinking?

SIDNEY

I don't know but I'm still in shock.

LANGSTON

Well, it's kinda your fault. All of your fresh out of Divinity School community empowerment crap finally rubbed off.

SIDNEY

You're the one who lost control of production. Not me.

GENIE

Enough. Both of you. Your father said he'd explain when he gets home.

SIDNEY

Yea, two hours ago. Where is he?

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The elderly NIGHT GUARD walks to Abram's office door. Knocks.

NIGHT GUARD

Pastor Holloway?

Seeing the door ajar, the guard enters and finds Abram passed out on the floor. Alarmed, the guard rushes to Abram, shakes him, but the pastor's body is limp. Unresponsive.

EXT. JOSE'S HOUSE - SOUTH CENTRAL, LOS ANGELES - DAY

THE NEXT DAY. Malcolm stands outside of a one-story house, anxious, checking for cops. TALIA (20s, Latina), frightened, tearful, stands at the door holding an INFANT.

TALIA

He ran the stupid car into a tree and they caught him.

MALCOLM

Shit.

Malcolm's CELL BUZZES: an "832" number he doesn't recognize. He sends it to voicemail.

TALIA

What about the guys you owe money? What if they hurt him in jail?

MALCOLM

Let me worry about that, okay?--

TALIA

I knew it. I told him not to trust you.

Talia unravels into sobs. Malcolm grasps her arms. Locks eyes.

MALCOLM

I'm gonna take care of everything, okay? The debt. Jose's lawyer....

TALIA

(inconsolable)
Just go, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Talia, I mean it. I'm gonna fix this--

Talia closes the door in Malcolm's face. Malcolm swallows, realizing just how bad he's fucked up. As he walks away, his phone BUZZES again. This time Malcolm answers angrily.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Who the hell is this?

HANK (V.O.)

Hank Rubens. Your father's attorney.

MALCOLM

I don't have a father, so don't call here anymore--

HANK (V.O.)

He's dead, Malcolm.

Malcolm stops walking. Isn't sure he heard right.

HANK (V.O.)

Abram is dead.

The news kicks Malcolm windless. While Hank continues to talk, Malcolm stands there at the curb, unable to speak or move.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. MIDTOWN STREET - HOUSTON, TEXAS - DAY

We're on Malcolm, in an N.W.A. T-shirt and jeans, stepping off of a Greyhound Bus and into the lazy hubbub of central Houston. He approaches HANK RUBENS (50s, black, thickset) leaning on a Mercedes, sweating through his blue suit.

HANK

'Bout time y'all rolled in. Hotter than two rabbits screwin' out here.

MALCOLM

Nice to finally meet my stalker.

HANK

(laughs)

Welcome to Houston, son. Welcome back I should say.

INT. BARBECUE JOINT - DAY

A down home greasy spoon. TELEVISIONS mounted over the bar are tuned to different LOCAL NEWS PROGRAMS, all reporting on ABRAM'S DEATH. We SEE INTERVIEWS with crying mourners, SHOTS from a vigil at New Light, and old FOOTAGE of the fallen pastor. The displays give us an immediate sense of the impact Abram's death is having on the community.

Malcolm sits across from Hank at a table. Hank is watching one of the screens. Pats sweat from his forehead.

HANK

It was a heart attack. Very sudden. Your daddy was too young to go like that. Had too much good left in him--

MALCOLM

Is it cool if we skip this part?

HANK

What part?

MALCOLM

The eulogy you're launching into. Only reason I'm here is 'cause you mentioned the word "inheritance". So let's bypass the part where you tell me how tragic this is and how great he was.

HANK

Aren't both things true?

MALCOLM

Was Abram Holloway great? I don't read Church Lady Digest so I'm not up on the latest rankings of shifty late-night televangelists.

HANK

Your father was one of the preeminent religious leaders in this country. He was the President's spiritual advisor.

MALCOLM

Oh, and stop calling him my father. I haven't even been in a room with him since I was eight. Didn't know we were blood 'til I was fifteen.

HANK

He tried to make contact, Malcolm. And he never stopped praying that God would soften your heart.

MALCOLM

Even if I believed in God, I doubt he could accomplish that. So. Inheritance.

Hank pulls out a document. Passes it to Malcolm.

HANK

Abram's estate is offering you a two hundred thousand dollars pay-out.

MALCOLM

(thinks hard, then)
Can I get it in cash?

HANK

Yes. But only if you agree to never disclose your relation to Abram and his family.

MALCOLM

Never have. Don't intend to start now.
(picking up a pen)
Where do I sign?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I'm sorry that took so long--

OLIVIA REID (late 20s, black) approaches in a waitress apron. She's darkly beautiful with tats and a punk rock edge. Malcolm gawks, instantly attracted.

OLIVIA

Can I start you with something to drink?

MALCOLM
 (re: her name tag)
 Olivia. That sure is a pretty name.

OLIVIA
 It's very common. But, thank you.

MALCOLM
 (flirtatiously)
 Have we met? LA perhaps? South Beach?--

HANK
 (interjecting)
 --I'll take a Jameson, neat. And he
 could use an ice water to cool off.

OLIVIA
 Yes, sir. I'll send those right out.

Malcolm watches Olivia walk off. Hank clears his throat.
 Malcolm looks back down at the document. Suddenly conflicted.

MALCOLM
 Two hundred thousand, huh?

HANK
 Is that a problem?

MALCOLM
 No. Bastards can't be choosers. But I
 did think I'd be worth more than this.

HANK
 Read the document carefully, son. This
 isn't what Abram left you. It's what
 his estate's offering you. Perhaps to
 avoid legal wrangling over the will.

Hank gives a prodding look. Malcolm takes the hint.

MALCOLM
 What's in the will?

HANK
 The executor of the estate has
 forbidden discussion of the will until
 Monday. After the funeral.

MALCOLM
 I can't wait that long. Who's the
 executor of the estate?

HANK
 Your stepmother. Genie.

The name conjures hard feelings and bad memories for Malcolm.
 He quickly realizes what this is and what he's up against.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY
 ON Langston, in a shirt and tie, knocking on a door.

LANGSTON

Sidney...

No answer. After a few seconds of silence, he pushes inside.

INT. SIDNEY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sidney, in pajamas, sits in a chair, knees to chest, staring blankly through a window. Her eyes are red from crying.

LANGSTON

You can't stay in here all day again. I took you off the program for Wednesday service tonight, but we have guests downstairs who'd like to extend their condolences.

Langston looks at a TELEVISION tuned to LOCAL NEWS. ON SCREEN: KNOX HARRISON (30s, black, intellectual, in a Muslim prayer hat) speaks to a REPORTER. CHYRON READS: COMMUNITY ACTIVIST.

REPORTER (ON TV)

In the past, you've been critical of Reverend Holloway, referring to him as an "Ecclesiastical con-artist".

KNOX (ON TV)

Yes, we've had our differences. But what America saw on Sunday was a man on the brink of repairing his legacy. That sermon was the battle cry for a movement and I hope that the next pastor of New Light will honor that vision.

LANGSTON

I'm so sick of this clown.

(cuts off the TV)

He left another message at the church. Now he claims that he was advising dad before he died. As if Abram Holloway'd take advice from some loudmouth Twitter thug. A Muslim Twitter thug at that.

SIDNEY

(shrugs)

Maybe he was talking to him. He wasn't talking to us.

Sidney continues to stare out. Langston flips on lights.

LANGSTON

Sidney, I need you to get in the shower, get dressed, and do something with that hair cause right now it looks it might crawl off of your head--

SIDNEY

Langston. Leave me alone.
(locking eyes)
Please...

Sidney's too weary for their usual back and forth. Langston is concerned but relents. Exits. Sidney's eyes land on a FRAMED PHOTO near the door: it's her and ABRAM at her Divinity School graduation. He's bursting with pride and she's basking in it.

I/E. TAXI/BAYOU WOODS ESTATES - DAY

As Malcolm's taxi drives up a hill bisecting the northern bayou, a Chateausque mansion sprawls out. Versailles of the marshlands. Malcolm can't help but marvel.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - FOYER - DAY

Malcolm stands at the door with the wary HOUSE MANAGER (40s).

HOUSE MANAGER

Nobody mentioned a godson.

MALCOLM

I've been terrible about visits, but I'm sure they'll be happy to see me.

TWO DELIVERY MEN step into the foyer with huge FLORAL BOUQUETS. The house manager sighs, overwhelmed. To Malcolm:

HOUSE MANAGER

Wait. Here.

The house manager walks off with the delivery men. When's she gone, Malcolm slips into the main hallway. He takes in the vaulted ceiling, flawless marble floors, and walls lined with expensive art and tasteful Christian iconography. Then --

Malcolm HEARS SINGING deeper in the house. A beautiful MALE ALTO. He follows the voice into the GREAT ROOM where he stumbles upon a gathering of two dozen well-heeled MOURNERS mingling and sipping sweet tea. It's an elite crowd of civic leaders, socialites and wealthy execs. A MALE SOLOIST from the choir CROONS at the piano.

MALCOLM

Guess my invite got lost in the mail.

Intrigued, Malcolm lingers. He takes a glass of sweet tea from a server's tray. OVERHEARS a conversation:

MALE MOURNER 1

Reverend Holloway is New Light. And that's the problem. Tell me who else can fill that space every Sunday?

MALE MOURNER 2

Maybe he can convince Jesus to come back and take the job.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Malcolm?

Malcolm turns. Khalil (the choir director) approaches.

KHALIL

It's Khalil. We were like best friends back in the day.

MALCOLM

(blinking)

Sorry, homey. I don't remember much about Houston.

KHALIL

You have a dog bite on the back of your leg because you were convinced that you had mind control over your grandma's Rottweilers. Here's mine.

Khalil pulls up his shirt and reveals a scar on his flank.

MALCOLM

(remembering)

Oh, snap... Khalil! You started the children's choir. Then harassed everybody until they joined.

KHALIL

Still my job. But now I'm the Music Director, so I harass people to join all seven choirs. Do you still sing?

MALCOLM

(grimaces)

Nah. That ended when my nuts dropped.

KHALIL

I bet you still have a great voice. Lemme hear it.

MALCOLM

Dawg. You literally have not changed.

EXT. POOL TERRACE - SAME

More guests are gathered near the pool. Genie stands with SCARLETT MAYFIELD (50s, white, well-preserved) and BRETT MAYFIELD (20s, white, sexy, with bad boy swagger).

SCARLETT

Lord knows our husbands had their silly rivalry but I hope we can move beyond all that and be there for each other.

GENIE

(embracing her)

Of course, Scarlett. And thank you both for coming.

BRETT

Pass along my condolences to Sidney.

GENIE

I will, sweetie.

As Brett walks off, Langston steps in beside Genie. Snickers.

LANGSTON

The vultures are already circling the open grave.

GENIE

Stop. It was nice of them to drop by.

LANGSTON

Nice? Tex Mayfield didn't build the biggest church in Houston by being nice. Bet he was trying to poach our advertising the second he found out dad was gone.

GENIE

You're being paranoid.

LANGSTON

No. I'm being realistic. We're about to take a huge financial hit--

Genie takes Langston's hand. Strokes his face.

GENIE

Sweetheart, I appreciate that you want to step in as the protector. And we'll discuss everything. But not right now. Okay?

Langston, a mama's boy, nods grudgingly. Genie looks inside and sees MALCOLM TALKING WITH KHALIL BY THE BAR. Her eyes go wide as she realizes who he is.

INT. GREAT ROOM - SAME

Khalil nods to a GROUP OF MEN across the room.

KHALIL

See the guy in the charcoal suit?

Malcolm sees CLEVE MCBRIDE (50s, square-jawed good looks)

MALCOLM

Pretty boy Floyd?

KHALIL

That's Reverend McBride. Abram's number two. He'll probably step in as interim pastor while Genie and the board decide who'll take over permanently.

MALCOLM

Why not just give it to him?

KHALIL

It doesn't work like that. You think regular politics are messy? They're nothing compared to politics in a big Southern church.

GENIE (O.S.)

Malcolm...

Malcolm sees Genie gliding in his direction with a well-practiced smile. His mood instantly darkens.

GENIE (CONT'D)

What a lovely surprise. Come. Why don't we have a chat?

MALCOLM

(smirks, ready)

That sounds wonderful.

INT. ABRAM'S STUDY - DAY

Genie enters behind Malcolm. Closes the door.

GENIE

Please. Have a seat.

MALCOLM

I don't plan to be here long. In fact, I'm back on the road Thursday, so I'd like to wrap this up soon.

GENIE

(a look of empathy)

I know this can't be easy for you.

(MORE)

GENIE (CONT'D)

But I'm glad you came. And I know,
somewhere, Abram is happy too.

MALCOLM

Listen. I'm sorry about your husband.
But let's cut the B.S.--

GENIE

--I already talked to Hank. He said
you're unhappy with the agreement.

MALCOLM

Because it feels like you're trying to
screw me over.

GENIE

That is not true, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Then why not show me Abram's will?

GENIE

Because we're not discussing the will
until after the funeral. That's how
it's done, traditionally.

MALCOLM

(increasingly impatient)
Like I said. I won't be here that long.

GENIE

I'm sorry to hear that. But if you
change your mind and need a place to
stay, we have plenty of room here.

Malcolm sees that he's hit a wall. Adjusts his approach.

MALCOLM

How about this? You write me a check
for what's in the will and I won't let
the press know how non-traditional this
family really is. I'll go quietly and
you'll never see me again.

Genie stares at Malcolm for a long beat. Then laughs.

GENIE

Is that what this is? You thought you
were going to come in here and shake me
down? In my home? I don't scare easily,
sweetheart. And I don't respond to
threats.

Genie holds Malcolm's gaze for a beat, making sure he gets it.

GENIE (CONT'D)

--So we'll talk about this on Monday.
And then I'll decide whether you'll get
a lump sum or if it's better to dole
out small amounts over time. Deal?

Genie smiles but her eyes glint with warning. Malcolm is
pissed but stands down.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Langston is huddled with Cleve. When Langston sees Malcolm and
Genie emerge, he approaches with urgency, eyeballing Malcolm.

LANGSTON

Do I need to call security?

GENIE

No. Langston, this is--

MALCOLM

Malcolm. Your god-brother.

Malcolm exchanges a glance with Genie. He's playing ball. For
now. Langston eyes Malcolm with deep suspicion. Cleve extends
his hand. A broad politician's smile.

CLEVE

Reverend McBride. You probably don't
remember me. I'm *Langston's* godfather.

MALCOLM

(sarcastic)

You look nothing alike. Good sign.

SIDNEY

(approaching)

Put me back on the program. I want to
do the Service tonight.

Sidney, still in pajamas, hair tied up in a rag, marches in
with renewed determination. Genie groans at her appearance.

GENIE

Sidney, we have guests.

SIDNEY

(ignoring Genie)

We can't fold under the weight of this.
We have to pray for strength and push
forward. That's what dad would want.

Then -- COMMOTION from the FOYER. A VOICE HOLLERING OUT--

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I said get off of me!

Startled, everyone looks. A fifteen-year-old girl in cornrows and a prep school uniform storms into the hallway. This is DANA HOLLOWAY. Genie rushes to Dana, embraces her.

GENIE

Dana! Sweetie, where have you been?
We've been worried sick.

DANA

I needed a few days to myself.

LANGSTON

You should've come home immediately.

Sidney, struck with emotion, throws her arms around Dana.

SIDNEY

I'm so glad you're home, D. And if you
need to talk about dad, your emotions--

DANA

No. That's exactly what I don't want.

Then two large, intimidating SCHOOL OFFICIALS enter. They're dressed in uniforms similar to Dana's.

DANA (CONT'D)

By the way, I think I got expelled from
boarding school.

Dana flashes two middle fingers at the school officials. Bolts upstairs. Genie sees that a few of the more judgemental society ladies from the party are watching. Reels with embarrassment. But Malcolm is enjoying the chaos. He moves closer to Genie, speaks confidentially.

MALCOLM

Oh and no deal. Come up with the will
by Friday or I'm going public.

Malcolm grins and heads for the door. Genie glares after him.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SANCTUARY STAGE - NIGHT

ANGLE ON - Sidney wailing into a mic, her face beaded with sweat beneath the spotlight. Then the percussions come in and Sidney dances across the stage accompanied by the choir. They're performing a bass-rattling hip-hop gospel track about claiming triumph in the face of adversity.

We SEE that tonight's audience is smaller than Sunday's, but heartfelt SINGING and SHOUTS of praise fill the space.

SONG PLAYS OVER THE NEXT TWO SCENES. INTERCUT PERFORMANCE.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - GENIE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Genie paces in her robe as Hank reads a handwritten document.

GENIE

I found it in Abram's safe. It looks like a draft of a new will, except it doesn't make sense. Abram and I agreed that he would leave Malcolm a one-time payout. But according to this--

HANK

(reading)
---He wants to leave him 25% of New Light Enterprises. I'll be damned.

GENIE

Clearly, he wasn't in his right mind. Why would he leave a quarter of our company to a child he didn't raise and barely knows? A stranger.

HANK

Now I see why you were pushing for that settlement. Sadly, in Texas this might hold up in court. I'll have the writing authenticated--

GENIE

(taking the document)
No. Not yet. If people find out about Malcolm it would turn into a scandal that the church couldn't withstand. Not to mention the stain on Abram's legacy...

Genie quickly folds the will and places it in a drawer. Meets eyes with Hank through the mirror.

GENIE (CONT'D)
 So I think it's best if what we've seen
 remains unseen for now.

EXT. SUNNYSIDE, HOUSTON - NIGHT

AS SIDNEY'S SONG CONTINUES, Malcolm is lugging his bag through a shady part of town. He approaches a small house hidden behind trees and wild vines. Climbs the steps. Knocks. No answer, but he hears a TV going. Knocks harder.

MALCOLM

Jack?

Malcolm walks to a window, and looks inside but two BARKING DOBERMANS leap into his eye-line, bearing fangs. Startled, Malcolm trips back off of the porch, crashes to the grass.

VOICE (O.S.)

Turn around, sucka! Show your face!

Malcolm rolls onto his back and finds himself staring into the barrel of a SAWED-OFF and the eyes of a WOMAN who isn't afraid to shoot. Malcolm yelps, covers his face.

MALCOLM

No! Grandma! It's me! It's Malcolm!

JACKIE "JACK" WALKER (60s but looks 40) street tough, with an obvious wig and a cigarette in her mouth. She studies Malcolm for a beat, then smiles --

JACK

Oh hey, sugar.
 (drags her cigarette)
 When'd you get so tall?

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SANCTUARY STAGE - NIGHT

Sidney takes center stage, belting the final emotional notes of her song. She ends with a long Whitney Houston-esque run so powerful that it sends her to her knees as the audience jumps to their feet in applause. Sidney stays on her knees for a beat, overcome with emotion, drawing strength from the energy of the crowd. As she stands, Cleve rushes on stage.

CLEVE

Hallelujah! One more round of applause
 for our Youth Pastor, Reverend Sidney.
 The apple of her father's eye and a
 blessing to us all.

Cleve kisses Sidney, then steps forward to address the crowd.

CLEVE (CONT'D)

It's with a broken heart that I find myself standing in tonight for my dear brother, Abram. But it's also my honor.

Instead of leaving the stage, Sidney steps next to Cleve.

SIDNEY

We're going to get through this, New Light! He was my father, but he was our family. You are our family.

The crowd cheers, eating up the emotional outburst. Cleve is annoyed but smiles and plays along.

CLEVE

That's exactly right, Reverend Sidney. And we're so blessed that Abram lives on in you, baby girl.

Cleve hugs Sidney again and steps ahead of her. But just as he brings the mic to his lips, Sidney speaks into hers.

SIDNEY

Not just me. He lives in all of us. And his spirit will always live in this church. I don't care who the new pastor is. This will always be his church and as long as I'm alive it will always house his mission. Can I get an Amen?

The crowd responds with rousing affirmations. Cleve realizes that his monotone delivery is no match for Sidney's down-home charisma. He claps as hard as he can to mask his anger.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Dana is slumped in a chair texting. Genie approaches.

GENIE

Dana, go to wardrobe. I want you to pick out a dress for the funeral.

DANA

I told you, I'm not wearing a dress.

GENIE

And I told you, you're not dressing like a boy to your father's service.

DANA

Fine. I won't go.

LANGSTON (O.S.)

Mom! Come here.

Genie gives up on Dana for now. She walks to Langston who's standing at the curtain, watching Sidney and Cleve on stage.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Look at those empty seats. He's been gone three days and attendance is already down twenty percent.

GENIE

Everything will work itself out. God never gives us more than we can bear--

LANGSTON

(frustrated, blurting)
Will you please stop deflecting!

GENIE

(taken aback)
I beg your pardon.

Langston shrinks under her stare. Breathes. Resets.

LANGSTON

We're in trouble, mom. That's not pessimism or a crisis of faith. That is a fact. We have to put a brave face on for the world? Fine. But we need to at least start being honest with each other. About the church, about dad...
(then, locking eyes)
About everything.

Langston's expression tells Genie that he's on to her. But Genie isn't sure that she's ready to come clean.

INT. JACK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Malcolm sits at the table examining three STATE IDS bearing PHOTOS of Jack in different wigs. Jack, in a wig cap, is alternating between warming up food and styling an auburn WIG on a mannequin head.

JACK

Can you believe it's been thirteen years since the last time I saw you? I would've visited but between jail in Florida and warrants in California my travel's been a bit limited.

MALCOLM

I see it hasn't stopped you from running scams...

Malcolm picks up a stack of blouses with SECURITY TAGS still attached, then reads from a phony ID:

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Ms. "Juanita Horowitz".

JACK

Boy, I don't run scams. I'm a business woman who seizes opportunities. You're the common criminal in the family.

MALCOLM

Actually, I went legit for two years. My boy and I started an auto repair shop. But it failed. Wound up owing the wrong people. You know the rest.

JACK

That's why we need to be smart about how we invest this money we're getting from your daddy's estate.

MALCOLM

The money "we're" getting?

JACK

Yes. "We." Abram still owes me for the pain he put my child through.

MALCOLM

I thought he bought you off already. Mom said you blackmailed him into pulling strings on a few of your cases in exchange for silence. About me.

Jack hesitates, caught, mildly ashamed.

JACK

Aren't you fixin' to do the same thing?

MALCOLM

No. I'm done being swept under the rug while they pretend to be the perfect God-fearing Christians.

JACK

You gonna call em out, huh? Stick it to 'em. Make 'em pay for how they treated you and ya mama.

MALCOLM

Hell yea. They're hypocrites.

JACK

Then you're dumber than I thought.

Malcolm reacts, confused. Jack serves him a plate of food.

JACK (CONT'D)

Know how much New Light brings in per week in tithes?

(then)

Three hundred grand.

MALCOLM

(floored)

Three hundred grand *per week*?

JACK

Now how many other people you know can make that much money, in cash, never pay taxes, never report a dime, and have no worries of getting locked up? Your little tell-all won't even be a blip on their long-term radar.

Malcolm takes this in for a beat.

MALCOLM

Fine. What do you think I should do?

Jack sits at the table with a peach cobbler. Cuts into it.

JACK

Seize the opportunity. Instead of getting angry, I like to throw on a new wig, a sweet smile, and focus on getting what I want. 'Cause why walk away with a tiny piece of the pie when you can take the whole damn thing?

Jack flashes a sly smile while Malcolm eats, thinks.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Langston, Sidney, and Dana are seated on couches, stunned, speechless. Genie, standing, fields questions as they come.

SIDNEY

Dad. My father. Had another son?

GENIE

Yes.

SIDNEY

Without you?

GENIE

Yes, Sidney. Obviously without me.

SIDNEY

But if he and Langston are the same age that means--

DANA

--It means dad was getting it in with a side chick.

GENIE

Dana. Watch your mouth.

LANGSTON

Why now? That's what I don't understand. If he hated dad so much, why not just stay in his little rat hole in LA and wait for a check?

DANA

(chastising)

If he's dad's son, he has a right to be here too.

LANGSTON

Excellent point, Dana.

(missing the point)

"If" he's dad's son. Did dad ever confirm with a DNA Test? Because if not I'll start coordinating that tonight--

GENIE

No, Langston. Let me handle this.

SIDNEY

(still in shock)

Man is prone to sin. I get that. But dad was the pastor of our church. The moral compass of our community--

Dana rolls her eyes, stands and starts to leave.

GENIE

Dana. We're having a family meeting. Sit back down.

DANA

For what? So I can listen to Langston complain about the ad revenue we're pulling in for dad's funeral? Or watch Sidney have a self-involved breakdown because she thinks dad only affects her? If that's a family meeting then I quit the family.

Before anyone can respond, Malcolm enters with the house manager. Sidney, Langston and Dana turn and gawk. Malcolm feels the uneven energy in the room. Immediately translates.

MALCOLM

I guess the cat's out the bag.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - GUEST SUITE - DAY

Malcolm drops his bag and takes in the room. King bed. Private patio. Dual flat screens. A far cry from the life he's been living. He looks over at Genie who's standing at the door.

MALCOLM

Thank you for letting me crash. And again, I'm sorry about earlier. I'm not that guy. If anything I hope that we can heal and establish a friendship.

GENIE

(an elusive smile)

Yes. I'd like that too. And you're welcome to stay as long as you need.

MALCOLM

Thanks. I appreciate it.

Genie exits. Malcolm takes another look at his tricked out suite and smiles. He could get used to this.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - GUEST SUITE - DAY

Malcolm is watching a YOUTUBE VIDEO on the computer. ON SCREEN: a DATELINE profile on ABRAM and NEW LIGHT. QUICK SHOTS of the church's growth over the years.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...From those humble beginnings in Third Ward Houston, Abram went on to amass a multi-million fortune through New Light Enterprises, a media and entertainment company focussed on the lucrative "inspirational" market...

Malcolm jots notes. Underlines the word "Inspirational".

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - DAY

Malcolm jogs downstairs. Dana is dribbling a basketball in the foyer. She sees Malcolm.

DANA

What's up, half-bro? You hoop?

Dana throws the ball at Malcolm. He catches it.

MALCOLM

Am I the best to ever go unsigned, is the real question. But I was actually headed over to the church. I wanna check it out.

DANA
I'll come. Give you the grand tour.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SANCTUARY BALCONY - DAY

Malcolm and Dana are on the balcony overlooking the massive arena. Malcolm is in awe.

MALCOLM
You could fit two basketball courts in here.

DANA
(starting out)
Probably. We do four services a week but we still end up having to turn people away. Even the children's church downstairs is standing room only.

MALCOLM
The children have their own church?

Dana and Malcolm walk onto --

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - 2ND LEVEL CONCOURSE - CONTINUOUS

A large mall-like area buzzing with NEW LIGHT EMPLOYEES and TOURISTS snapping photos. Dana and Malcolm walk past a large glass-paned bookstore, concession stands and a sit-down cafe.

DANA
TV production is our main business. Talk shows, concert specials, singing competitions. Langston's mostly in charge of that.

MALCOLM
(pointing)
Is that a gym? Can I live here?

DANA
(looking at her cell)
Ugh. Stupid phone's dead. Can I use yours? Gotta check in with the warden.

Malcolm hesitates.

DANA (CONT'D)
Sixty seconds tops. I have sub-zero interest in your naked selfies.

MALCOLM
(laughs, hands it over)
Take your time.

Dana takes the cell and walks. Malcolm glances out of a window where something catches his eye. Down in an empty lot he sees--

Langston standing at the driver's window of a black ESCALADE. He anxiously passes money and receives something in return. As Langston returns to the building he scans the area to make sure nobody's watching. But Malcolm saw the whole thing.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - LANGSTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Langston sits behind a desk, texting, ignoring Malcolm.

LANGSTON

Sorry I keep picking up the phone. The main choir just got nominated for a bunch of Grammys so we're shooting a music video tomorrow.

MALCOLM

Tomorrow? You didn't cancel it?

LANGSTON

(still texting)
Why would I do that? We already paid for the set..

Langston finally rests his phone, crosses his arms, smiles.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Gosh. Where do we even begin?

MALCOLM

Yea, I don't know--

LANGSTON

(overlapping)
Where'd you go to school?

Malcolm is startled by the rapid fire question. Stammers.

MALCOLM

Just random schools in South Central.

LANGSTON

(condescending)
No. By school I meant college.

MALCOLM

Oh. I didn't go to college.

LANGSTON

Really? You're so well-spoken.

The jab hits Malcolm in a blind spot, but he absorbs it.

MALCOLM

Thanks. By the way, I love your style. Your jeans are J-Brand, right?

LANGSTON

(nods)

Love em. Wear em all the time. You too?

MALCOLM

Sadly, no. They don't fit me in the crotch area. Not even a little. But I love the look on you.

Langston sneers at the obvious set up. Malcolm feigns innocence.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

And the church is incredible. I had no idea how big it is and how much you do.

LANGSTON

Well, thank you. We're proud of what we've built here. And we'll continue to build. But right now we have focus on fighting off the wolves. People who assume we're defenseless without my father. Who don't think we can see what they're up to. Or that we won't draw our guns and kill. Needless to say, they'd be tragically mistaken.

Langston stares into Malcolm for a long beat, so there's no mistaking where his threat is directed.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - REHEARSAL ROOM - NIGHT

Khalil and the twelve other MEMBERS of the YOUNG MEN'S CHOIR are in the midst of rehearsing a dynamic a capella version of "Take Me to Church by HOZIER. Three of the guys use their mouths to impressively mimic horns and percussion.

Malcolm enters and sits in the back. When the song ends, Khalil turns to him.

KHALIL

You ready to join yet?

MALCOLM

Nope. Gangstaz don't sing.

Khalil leads the other guys in jeering Malcolm. Then --

SIDNEY (O.S.)

Hey.

Malcolm turns and sees Sidney approaching. Stands.

MALCOLM

Hey.

SIDNEY
I'm sorry I didn't have much to say
last night. I was a little...

MALCOLM
I get it. Trust me.

SIDNEY
Can we talk now? Somewhere else?

MALCOLM
Actually, I'm supposed to go out with
Khalil after this.

SIDNEY
Cool. I'll come with you.

MALCOLM
(laughs)
Nah. You don't wanna go where we're
going.

SIDNEY
What is it, a night club? I think I can
handle a night club.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Genie is pulling photos of Abram from an album. Cleve is
seated across from her.

CLEVE
You're comfortable with him here?

GENIE
Once I actually laid eyes on him, I
couldn't just turn him away.

CLEVE
Well, if anything gets out of hand, I
want you to call me. I mean it.

GENIE
Thank you, Cleve. And thank you for
being so patient with me on the interim
pastor appointment. You're first in
line, but the board wants me to
consider other candidates.

CLEVE
They want a celebrity preacher.

GENIE
But Abram wouldn't want that.

Standing, Genie feels a pinch in her neck, winces in pain.

GENIE (CONT'D)

I keep falling asleep on the couch and
it's destroying my back.

CLEVE

Come here, let me see...

Cleve sits next to Genie and kneads his thumbs into her back.
Genie winces again, but this time there's release.

CLEVE (CONT'D)

That's not the couch. That's stress.
Which is understandable with everything
that's going on. Is that good?

GENIE

(a moan)

Mhm.

CLEVE

Everybody needs help Genie. Somebody to
give support. Look after them. Abram's
gone, but I'm here. *Use me.*

Cleve's face brushes against the back of Genie's head and his
hands - slow, sensual - slide down over her collar bone. Genie
reacts. Knocks his hands away. Shocked. Betrayed.

GENIE

What are you doing?

CLEVE

I'm sorry. Guess I got lost in a memory
of the two of us.

Genie knows the memory, but it unnerves her. She rises.

GENIE

Cleve, you should go home.

CLEVE

You still feel guilty, don't you? About
that one month we had. After the years
of pain that Abram put you through.

GENIE

Because I'm not Abram. And neither are
you. Now get out.

Genie trembles with emotion but her eyes are steel, deathly
serious. Cleve relents, backs away, exits. When he's gone,
Genie shudders with emotion. Sits to catch her breath.

INT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

The main room of a dark, no-frills strip club. Two thick-bodied STRIPPERS gyrate and twerk for cash on stage while other GIRLS work the floor.

Malcolm, Khalil and Sidney are seated at a table below stage. Sidney looks completely out of place, clutching her purse to her chest.

SIDNEY

This is a disgusting, misogynistic circus and I think I might throw up.

Malcolm holds out a shot of whiskey.

MALCOLM

Will this help?

SIDNEY

Maybe.

Sidney downs the shot like a pro. Slams the glass.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

Nope. Still completely gross.

KHALIL

Sidney is New Light's resident post-feminist.

MALCOLM

Yea? How does that work? Being a feminist and a church pastor?

SIDNEY

Why would it not?

MALCOLM

Organized religion has been enslaving women for thousands of years.

SIDNEY

No, men have been enslaving women. And did you really say that after stuffing four singles in a girl's panties?

KHALIL

Malcolm. I've been waiting to ask. How'd you become an atheist?

MALCOLM

Well, I prefer to call myself a realist. And I didn't become one. I just grew up.

(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I realized that most religions are based on a bunch of fairytales used to pimp out the masses and control their behavior. And the only people who really benefit are the wealthy pimps.

SIDNEY

Is that why you hated my father?
Because he was a pimp?

Sidney's abrupt question sucks the air out of the room.

KHALIL

Malcolm hated Abram?

MALCOLM

I didn't mention Abram.

SIDNEY

You didn't have to. You made your passive aggressive point.

Sidney sneers and cuts her eyes away. Malcolm sighs.

MALCOLM

Look, I'm sorry--

SIDNEY

--I am so sick of people judging him. People like you who didn't even know him. Because if you did, you'd know he had a beautiful heart. He changed people's lives.

MALCOLM

Well, he destroyed two. And you just found that out. So it sounds like you didn't know him too well either.

His words hit Sidney like a truck. Tears rise. She stands.

SIDNEY

I'm gonna head out.

KHALIL

I'll walk you.

SIDNEY

No. I'm fine.

Sidney storms off. Khalil watches after her, concerned.

KHALIL

Did I miss something?

Malcolm is distracted. He sees a new dancer walk out on stage and immediately recognizes her. It's Olivia.

MALCOLM
I know that girl. She's a waitress.

KHALIL
Olivia?

MALCOLM
You know her?

KHALIL
She was in the kid's choir with us.

MALCOLM
That girl? With that body?

KHALIL
Things change. Some more than others.

Olivia suddenly stops dancing. Catches her breath. Looking dizzy. Quickly leaves stage. Malcolm watches her go.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - DANA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Dana is sitting in front her MACBOOK, talking to a girl named ERICA on SPEAKERPHONE. ON SCREEN: PHOTOS OF MALCOLM and his FRIENDS from LA. Most of the snaps are with Jose and Talia.

DANA
I can't believe you broke into his phone in the two minutes I had it.

ERICA (O.S.)
It's an easy hack.
(flirty)
Maybe one day we'll meet and you can repay me.

DANA
(hesitant)
Yea. One day for sure.

ERICA
Check it out. Isn't this his friend?

Erica sends a HYPERLINK. Dana clicks and brings up a YOUTUBE VIDEO. ON SCREEN: a NEWS STORY on the "Malibu Porsche Heist".

REPORTER (V.O.)
One of the suspects awaits arraignment while the other, black, in his late 20s, remains at large...

Dana's jaw drops as she watches CCTV FOOTAGE of the heist. The picture isn't clear, but deep down she knows it's Malcolm.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. STRIP CLUB - BACKSTAGE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Olivia is bent over the sink, holding her stomach. Sick. She looks up at the mirror and turns to the side, placing her hands over her belly. Then -- KNOCKING. Olivia opens the door. The TALENT BOOKER gives her a look.

TALENT BOOKER
You should take a break. You'll probably start showing soon anyway.

Olivia nods, resignedly.

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Olivia exits the strip club pulling a rolling bag behind her. As she steps into the parking lot --

MALCOLM
Olivia... Hold up.

Olivia sees Malcolm jogging toward her, rolls her eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I'm not stalking you. We know each other. I'm Reverend Holloway's godson.

Olivia stops and looks at him more closely. Her face changes.

OLIVIA
Wow... It is you.
(then, saddening)
I'm so sorry about Reverend Holloway.

MALCOLM
(feigning depression)
It's been hard, you know? Which is why I was hoping we could hang out. I could really use someone to talk to.

OLIVIA
I'm crazy busy these days.

MALCOLM
I'll work around your schedule. Or I can just keep crying alone.

Malcolm mopes. Sniffles. Olivia tries to resist but has to laugh. Malcolm sees this and knows he has her on the hook.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - SIDNEY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sidney's eyes creak open. Yawning, she turns and sees Brett, the Mayfields' son, asleep next to her. Jolts upright. Sidney looks at the time (8AM) and goes into panic mode.

SIDNEY

Brett... Brett, wake up.

Sidney shakes Brett until his eyes open. He smiles up.

BRETT

Morning, pretty girl.

SIDNEY

You have to go before someone sees you.
Come on, get up.

BRETT

(sits up, groaning)
I thought you were getting your own
place after Divinity School. And why
are we still hiding anyway?
(kissing her neck)
Because I'm a sexy ass white boy?

SIDNEY

No. Because our families hate each
other.

BRETT

But we love each other.

Brett tries to tackle Sidney. Sidney pushes him off.

SIDNEY

Born again virgin, remember?

BRETT

Oh yea. Why are you doing that again?

SIDNEY

So I can focus on my calling. In fact,
I've been thinking about going after
the Head Pastor seat at New Light.

BRETT

Your father's seat?

SIDNEY

Yes.

BRETT

Come on, Sid. This is Houston, not
Boston. You really think the church
would hire a female pastor?

SIDNEY

I don't care. Daddy planned to give me
the church one day. Why not now?

INT. NEW LIGHT SANCTUARY - LANGSTON'S OFFICE - DAY

ON a line of cocaine disappearing through a straw. When the
head tilts back we SEE Langston, waiting to feel it.

INT. NEW LIGHT SANCTUARY - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Genie is walking with an ASSISTANT. Langston flags her down.

LANGSTON

Mom. Wait up.

The assistant breaks away. Langston walks with Genie.

GENIE

Did you cancel the shoot?

LANGSTON

No. The shoot's happening.

GENIE

Honey, why are you giving yourself
unnecessary stress?

LANGSTON

That's not what I want to talk about.
We need to talk about Malcolm.

GENIE

(groans)

Didn't I say I'm handling it?

LANGSTON

He's hiding something. There's no trace
of him online. No social media, which
is odd for my generation. I don't have
proof. Not yet. But I have a sixth
sense for these things--

GENIE

(stops walking)

Langston, I have to meet with the
Trustee Board in twenty minutes--

LANGSTON

--That's another thing. I should be in
the board meetings. I deserve more
decision-making power.

GENIE

And you'll get it. When you're ready.

Genie kisses Langston, then leaves him there boiling.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Dana goes up for a shot. Malcolm leaps to kill it but Dana knocks him back. Sinks the shot. Malcolm crashes to the grass.

DANA
I thought you were the greatest.

MALCOLM
Yo, chill. You only got this one cause I'm distracted.

Dana sits next to Malcolm on the grass.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I kinda met someone last night.

DANA
(grins)
Oh word? She cute?

MALCOLM
No. She's *bad*. Got a date tonight.

DANA
Nice. I met someone too.

MALCOLM
Yea?
(hesitant)
A guy.... Or....

DANA
(with a look)
A girl obviously.

MALCOLM
Hey, I had a hunch, but never assume.

DANA
We haven't actually met-met. Just on online. I'm too nervous.

MALCOLM
Why?

DANA
(shrugs)
What if she's not feeling me?

MALCOLM
First off, she'll feel you 'cause you're related to me. Second, you can only be yourself.
(MORE)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Well, not your whole self. Just the good parts. Wait until she's locked in you before you start droppin' grenades.

Dana laughs. Takes the advice to heart. Then--

DANA

Wanna see something cool?

EXT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - GARAGE - DAY

A large structure attached to the side of the house. Dana punches a code on the security box. We SEE Malcolm clock the code instinctively. The door unlatches. They enter.

INT. ABRAM'S CAR GARAGE - DAY

Twelve rare luxury vehicles are parked inside. Among them are three Ferraris, a Bugatti, and a platinum-colored Lamborghini Veneno. Malcolm's jaw drops.

DANA

He was a big car guy. He let me drive the Bugatti a few times.

Malcolm circles the Veneno like it's a sleeping tiger.

DANA (CONT'D)

He never lets anybody drive the Lambo.

MALCOLM

I wouldn't even let people set their dirty eyes on it. This has gotta be worth at least three million.

DANA

He was planning to sell 'em before he died. Had some kinda moral awakening.

MALCOLM

Were you close to him?

DANA

(pauses, fighting emotion)
If you haven't noticed, I'm the freak of the family. "The bad one". But he'd always tell me "There's no such thing as bad people. Just broken spirits and lost souls." Corny I know, but maybe he's right.

Dana looks at Malcolm. Those words were meant for him, and he nods, but she can't tell if they truly sunk in.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Genie sits at the head of a conference table with two dozen TRUSTEE BOARD MEMBERS (mainly black, male, over 50) including Cleve. Langston stands against the wall behind Genie.

GENIE

With Abram's passing, I know that we're all concerned about the future of New Light. But I'm confident in the staying power of Abram's vision and everything we've all worked to build.

BOARD MEMBER #1

That's a lovely sentiment, Genie, and we admire everything you do as our First Lady. But there's no way for New Light to maintain its success without making changes.

GENIE

For example?

BOARD MEMBER #1

There's been talk of New Light merging with another church.

GENIE

No mergers. Abram wanted this to be a family business and I intend for it to stay that way.

BOARD MEMBER #1

The church and New Light Enterprises are separate entities. The former falls under board oversight.

GENIE

But both were started by my husband.

BOARD MEMBER #1

With all due respect, Genie--

GENIE

(forcefully)

I wasn't initiating a debate. But I'll take the due respect.

Genie glowers. The board member, startled by her assertiveness, backs down.

BOARD MEMBER #2

Mrs. Holloway. Have you made any decisions about the interim pastor?

Genie pauses. Feels Cleve in her periphery. Shakes her head.

GENIE

No. I need more time to review options.

Hank enters the room. Whispers in Genie's ear.

HANK

We need to talk.

GENIE

Can it wait fifteen minutes?

HANK

No. I'm afraid it can't.

EXT. THIRD WARD COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

A rough part of town. Sidney parks her Mercedes coupe at the curb and climbs out. Between her car, her Jimmy Choos and her Céline bag, Sidney stands out like a sore thumb. As she approaches the center, she sees Knox supervising a group of TEENS spray painting a mural on the wall. Knox glances up.

KNOX

Sidney Holloway? What a nice surprise.
(extending his hand)
Knox Harrison.

Sidney shakes his hand.

SIDNEY

I know. I got your messages.

KNOX

I'm sorry about your father. I know
I've said some harsh things about him
in the past, but he was a good man.

SIDNEY

Thank you. I came down here because you
said you and my father talked about his
plans for the church. But... Why you?

KNOX

Well, I'm not Christian, but as an
activist I value the black church and
what it stands for historically. I
think your father saw that in me. And I
think sometimes it's just easier to
confide in a stranger.

SIDNEY

I'm planning to take my father's seat
at New Light. So I'm hoping you'll
share whatever her shared with you.

KNOX

It would be my honor. Pastor Holloway.

Knox flashes a charming smile. Sidney's unexpectedly smitten.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

CAMERAS are rolling on the music video shoot. A dozen MEMBERS of the MAIN CHOIR are dressed in pristine white robes, SINGING on a Winter-themed set. Langston stands next to the DIRECTOR (male, 30s) looking tense, agitated.

DIRECTOR

Cut! Again from the top.

LANGSTON

What? Why are we doing it again?

DIRECTOR

Because I didn't get my shot.

LANGSTON

The shot was fine. If you keep doing superfluous takes, you're gonna send us over budget.

DIRECTOR

(annoyed, looking away)
Someone please get this guy off my set!

LANGSTON

(seeing red)
What did you do say? Your set?

Langston explodes. He lunges at the director and snatches the headphones off of his head. The crew scatters with gasps and screams. The director cowers as Langston continues to rage.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

This is my set! And you are fired!

CLEVE (O.S)

Langston!

Cleve enters with authority. Langston breathes. Cools off.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - CLEVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Langston, ashamed, tearful, sits across from Cleve.

LANGSTON

I hated Malcolm when we were kids.
Because of the way dad looked at him.

(MORE)

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

That look of pride most dads have when they look at their first son. But he never looked at me that way. Not once--

Langston's voice cracks. He unravels into weeps.

CLEVE

Langston, look at me.
(meeting eyes, darkening)
Get over it. Stop being a bitch.

Langston is startled by Cleve's cold, unsympathetic stare.

CLEVE (CONT'D)

You're the head of your family now. Not your mother. And certainly not your wayward sisters. You have to remind them of their Biblical place. Your father was a failure in that regard but you can't afford to be.

Cleve opens an address book. Jots a number on a Post-it.

CLEVE (CONT'D)

This is an associate of your father's. He should be able to help you with the Malcolm problem.

Cleve extends the Post-it. Langston, adequately shamed, chokes down all emotion. Takes the paper from Cleve.

INT. HANK'S OFFICE - DUSK

Genie sits in front of a TV. Hank plays a video on screen.

HANK

When the package came in there was no return address.

ON SCREEN: GRAINY CCTV FOOTAGE. A MOTEL HALLWAY lined with rooms. The figures step into the light and we immediately recognize the man. It's ABRAM, in a dark coat and a fedora. He's with a woman whose face is obscured. They enter a room together. Genie stares at the video, stunned. Guttled.

GENIE

When?

HANK

The time stamp is December. We haven't received any indications of blackmail yet but we should be prepared.

Genie continues to stare at the STATIC HALLWAY FOOTAGE on screen. She doesn't move, but there's heat behind her eyes and it's burning all of her illusions about Abram to the ground.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - ABRAM'S CLOSET - NIGHT

A huge walk-in closet with racks of expensive clothes and shoes. Malcolm stands in the mirror in a designer blazer. Slips his feet into a pair of black Ferragamos.

MALCOLM
Boom! They fit.

DANA
Dad hadn't even worn those yet. Hope they help you get some tonight.

MALCOLM
(dapping her up)
Thanks for the hook up, D-Money.

Dana exits. Malcolm looks at himself in the mirror in the blazer and the image triggers a FLASHBACK:

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE DRESSING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Abram (late 20s) knelt in front of Malcolm (8) tying his tie.

ABRAM
Remember. Clothes don't make the man.
But they can help make you the man you want to be.

INT. ABRAM'S CLOSET - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Malcolm hears someone enter. Turns. Sidney stands near the door, startled to see Malcolm in her father's clothes. She pauses for a long beat, then leans into the door. A sad grin.

SIDNEY
You look like my dad.

Malcolm has mixed feelings about this, but cuts a smile.

MALCOLM
So do you.

INT. GROOVES LOUNGE - NIGHT

Malcolm, dressed in Abram's clothes, enters a dimly lit night spot with a relaxed vibe. The crowd is a mix of black bohemians and college students.

ON STAGE: Olivia is singing with a three person BAND. Their music is soulful, funky, fun, and Olivia is a powerhouse vocalist with mesmerizing stage presence (Think: Alice Smith).

Malcolm stands at the back of the small crowd gathered near the stage. Olivia spots him. Smiles.

INT. THIRD WARD STREET - NIGHT

Malcolm and Olivia walk along a residential street in a working class part of Houston.

OLIVIA
I stopped singing in the choir the same time I stopped going to church. But I still have my personal relationship with God.

MALCOLM
Does God know that you...

Malcolm gyrates his hips like a stripper. Olivia laughs.

OLIVIA
I'm not perfect. But for me it's a matter of faith. I can connect my biggest regrets to moments when I lost faith in something bigger than myself.

Olivia stops in front of a small CHURCH on the corner.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)
The old New Light. Ring any bells?

MALCOLM
Nope.

OLIVIA
Let's see if it's open.

Olivia walks up the front steps. Opens the door.

MALCOLM
It's our first date and you're already dragging me to church.

Olivia roll her eyes and enters. Malcolm grudgingly follows.

INT. CLEVE'S HOUSE - FOYER - NIGHT

KNOCKING at the front door. Cleve enters, half asleep, shirtless, checks the window, opens the door. Genie is standing outside in her robe, out of breath, out of sorts.

CLEVE
Genie, what happened?

Genie walks past Cleve into the house. But doesn't engage.

CLEVE (CONT'D)

Did you drive here?... Genie, you're worrying me a little. Talk to me.

Genie shakes her head, then looks up, finally meeting eyes.

GENIE

I didn't come here to talk.

Cleve sees the desire in Genie's eyes. He pulls her close. Kisses her. They go at each other hungrily.

INT. DANA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dana in front of her computer, talking to ERICA on SPEAKER.

ERICA (O.S.)

So we're meeting tonight? Forreal?

DANA

Maybe tonight. I'll let you know. Okay?

Dana hangs up. She thinks for a beat, scared, conflicted. Finally, she stands and takes off her shirt. She opens a drawer and pulls out a band of spandex. Staring in the mirror, she wraps the spandex around her chest, once, twice...

INT. OLD NEW LIGHT CHURCH - NIGHT

Malcolm and Olivia roam through the church's unvarnished hallways. It's completely different from the New Light we've seen. They follow SINGING VOICES into the SANCTUARY.

The CHOIR is rehearsing "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." Malcolm takes in the room. Slips into a FLASHBACK. CONTINUE SONG OVER:

I/E. OLD NEW LIGHT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

MONTAGE:

-- Malcolm (8), Langston (8), and Sidney (6) playing tag with Abram in the backyard of the church.

-- Malcolm standing at the pulpit. Abram is in the aisle watching him. Teaching him how to preach.

ABRAM

People want something to believe in. So let them believe in you.

-- The children's choir rehearsing. We see Malcolm, Khalil (8) and Olivia (6). Olivia has a solo. Her voice is unusually powerful for a child. Malcolm watches her, crushing hard.

OLIVIA (PRE-LAP)
We should go.

INT. OLD NEW LIGHT - REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Malcolm turns to Olivia. In an instant, the woman before him becomes one with the girl from his memory.

OLIVIA
Did anything look familiar?

MALCOLM
(nods, cuts a smile)
Yeah. A few things actually.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

ERICA HUGHES (16, pretty) stands near a park bench, scanning the moonlit area until she sees a dark figure approaching --

ERICA
Derek?

The figure steps into a shaft of light and we see his face. It's Dana in a baseball cap with a moustache and goatee penciled onto her face. But to a stranger, she resembles a handsome teenage boy. Erica throws her arms around Dana.

ERICA (CONT'D)
It's you!

DANA
See there. Told you I'm real.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Malcolm stands at the piano. Sidney is on the keys playing "Ordinary People" by John Legend. On cue, Malcolm opens his mouth to sing but his voice cracks badly.

MALCOLM

I told you. It's a lost cause.

SIDNEY

You're just rusty. Let's try the bridge.

Malcolm groans. Sidney starts again. Malcolm breathes. Sings the bridge. This time his voice holds the notes beautifully, rivaling any hot R&B singer. As he reaches the chorus, Sidney joins in. Langston enters unseen as Malcolm and Sidney hit their groove, harmonizing perfectly until the song ends.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

Wow. You're good.

MALCOLM

No. *You're* good.

LANGSTON

(stepping forward)
Where's Dana?

SIDNEY

(seeing him, shrugs)
Your guess is as good as mine.

LANGSTON

We're having a family meeting. Now. You too, Malcolm.

Langston exits. Malcolm and Sidney exchange confused glances.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - ABRAM'S STUDY - DAY

Malcolm, Genie, Langston, and Sidney are gathered.

SIDNEY

Langston, what is this about?

LANGSTON

I dunno. Maybe Malcolm can tell us.

MALCOLM

Tell you what?

Langston picks up a manila envelope. Passes it to Sidney.

LANGSTON

If you're Malcolm Walker. Then who is
Malcolm Greenley?

Sidney removes a stack of PD RECORDS bearing MUGSHOTS of
Malcolm. Her jaw drops as she pulls through page after page.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Larceny. Grand Theft Auto. Possession
of a concealed weapon. The sale of
stolen property. Battery. This is who
has been in our house.

Sidney looks at Malcolm. Sees him in a different light.

SIDNEY

You told us you owned an auto shop.

MALCOLM

I did... But I...

(then)

Fuck it. I don't have to do this. I
don't owe you all a damn thing.

LANGSTON

Then get out you hood rat piece of
garbage. You criminal. Thug!

Malcolm lunges at Langston, but Genie moves in between them.

GENIE

Stop it! Just stop...

Malcolm backs away. He sees the fear on Sidney's face. The
conflict on Genie's. And Langston's satisfied grin.

MALCOLM

My mother changed our last names to
Greenley so we could hide from a
boyfriend who was beating her up.
That's who Malcolm Greenley is.

Malcolm exits. Langston waves the stack of paper at Genie.

LANGSTON

See. I told you. From now on I expect a
lot more respect around here--

Genie snatches the papers from Langston's hand and throws
them. Glowering.

GENIE

I knew.

She exits, leaving Langston with his tail between his legs.

INT. GALLERIA MALL - DAY

Dana (as Derek) and Erica stroll through the mall.

ERICA

Tell me more about your family.

Dana hesitates. Doesn't know how to swing this.

DANA

They're cool. I have a sister who's really smart but talks too much. Two brothers who are both a little crazy. And my mom... We don't have a lot in common. But she tries.

ERICA

What about your Dad?

Dana pauses for a long beat. Then finally says it --

DANA

He died.

ERICA

Oh no... Derek, I'm so sorry.

Erica grabs Dana's hand to show support. Doesn't release it. Dana smiles, appreciative. Kisses her on the cheek.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Malcolm is in bed reading an ARTICLE ABOUT JOSE'S ARREST on his cell. Genie enters. Malcolm tucks the cell away. Sits up.

GENIE

I'm sorry about Langston.

MALCOLM

(shrugs)

If I raised black American Psycho I'd be sorry too.

Genie hands Malcolm a photocopy of Abram's new will.

GENIE

That's the part of the will that addresses your inheritance. Abram changed it shortly before he died. But he left all of you the same thing.

Malcolm reads the document.

MALCOLM

A stake in the company? There's no money attached?

GENIE

Not immediately, no.

MALCOLM

What the Hell am I supposed to do with this? I don't wanna be a part of your church, your family, none of it.

Malcolm starts to panic. Frustrated tears rise. Genie is startled by his response.

GENIE

Malcolm, is everything okay?

Malcolm throws the papers. Stands. Brimming with anger.

MALCOLM

You don't think I know why me and my mom got shipped to Cali? You don't think I know it was you?

Genie sees the fury and pain in Malcolm's eyes. It stirs memories and emotions she's held back for years.

GENIE

I understand why you think that but it wasn't that simple. We all made mistakes back then.

MALCOLM

I know. I'm one of those mistakes. And I'm outta here in the morning.

Malcolm takes the laptop and walks into the bathroom. Closes the door. Genie stands there alone, heavy with past regret.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Olivia sits at the keyboard in her shadow-swept living room. She SINGS "Hear My Call" by Jill Scott.

SONGS PLAYS OVER THE NEXT SERIES OF SCENES.

EXT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

Malcolm walks over the estate grounds, phone to his ear.

MALCOLM

It's Malcolm. AC's contact from LA.

Malcolm reaches the CAR GARAGE. Dials on the security pad.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

How much you think he'd give me for a Veneno?

The garage door opens. Malcolm walks inside. Stares at the Lamborghini at the center of the room.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I can do the drop tonight. But I'll need the cash tonight too.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A dark, sweaty house party with HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS dancing to R&B, drinking, and talking trash.

Dana and Erica are dancing to a slow song, gazing at each other as they rock in unison. Until it ends.

ERICA

I'm gonna get a drink.

Erica kisses Dana and walks to the COOLERS across the room. Before she gets there, a group of douchey GUYS catcall her.

GUYS

Nice booty... Come over here, baby.

One of the guys, resembling a BULLDOG, grabs Erica's arm and yanks her toward him. Erica pushes him away. Dana jumps into action. Charges the guy. Gets right in his face.

DANA

Hey. You got a problem or something?

Everyone looks, hoping for a brawl. Bulldog laughs nervously.

BULLDOG

Nah, you're good man.

Dana takes Erica's hand and walks her to the coolers. The Bulldog sneers and exchanges glances with his friends.

INT. HOLLOWAY RESIDENCE - ABRAM'S STUDY - NIGHT

The lights are out. Malcolm, in a robe, is searching the room. Rummaging through shelves. He opens a bottom drawer and finds a small unlocked lock-box. Opens it. Keys. He searches for the one with the Lambo symbol. Finds it. Bingo.

EXT. STREET - WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT

Dana and Erica are walking hand-in-hand along the sidewalk. A red TERCEL drives up behind them. Parks. The car doors open and three guys jump out. It's the Bulldog from earlier and his crew. Dana stops walking and turns back, scared but defiant.

INT. ABRAM'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Malcolm approaches the Lamborghini. Waves the digital key in front of it. The doors go up. Malcolm climbs in.

INT. OLIVIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

AS THE SONGS BUILDS TO A CLIMAX, Olivia sings through tears. Emotionally riven. Brimming with inexplicable forboding.

OLIVIA
*God, please hear my call/I am afraid
 for me/Love has burned me raw/I need
 your healing/Please, please, please.*

EXT. STREET - WAREHOUSE DISTRICT - NIGHT

The Bulldog and his crew are marching toward Dana. Dana looks at Erica and says --

DANA
 Run... Go!

BULLDOG
 You a tough guy, right? Let's see it.

The Bulldog steps to Dana and pushes her hard in the chest and swings a fist. Dana ducks the hit and swings back, hitting the Bulldog hard in face. In the process Dana's hat gets knocked off of her head, revealing a knotted ponytail.

Now the boys are looking at Dana harder and realize...

BULLDOG (CONT'D)
 Oh shit... It's a fucking tranny.

The boys crack up laughing. Dana looks back and sees Erica, who's watching from a few yards off in stunned disbelief.

DANA
 I said "Go"!

Erica is too shocked to think for herself, so this time she runs and doesn't stop. Dana, humiliated, can't seem to gather herself. The Bulldog throws a sucker punch, slamming her to the ground. The other guys join in with kicks and punches, HURLING VIOLENTLY TRANSPHOBIC SLURS.

I/E. LAMBORGHINI/THIRD WARD HOUSTON - NIGHT

Malcolm speeds through a desolate stretch in Houston's Third Ward. Then --

Malcolm's PHONE RINGS. He picks it up without looking.

MALCOLM
I'm on the way.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(crying)
Malcolm?

MALCOLM
(confused, then realizing)
Dana?

I/E. LAMBORGHINI/HIGHWAY ROAD - LATER

Malcolm speeds until he sees Dana sitting on the side of the road. Malcolm pulls over, jumps out, rushes to her.

Dana has a bad cut on her lip. Bloody knuckles. Malcolm sees the drawn-in moustache and goatee on her face that's now smeared. But there's no time for questions. He helps her up.

MALCOLM
Come on. I got you.

END OF SONG.

INT. HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY AREA - NIGHT

Genie and Sidney rush through the E.R. and turn into an open ROOM. Dana is in the bed with a small bandage on her lip and another on her hand. Malcolm is seated next to her.

GENIE
Oh my God... Are you okay?

They both rush to Dana's side.

GENIE (CONT'D)
Dana what happened?

DANA
Nothing. I got into a fight.

GENIE
What? With who?

SIDNEY
Why didn't you call me?

DANA (CONT'D)
This is why. I told Malcolm where Dad's keys were and he picked me up.

When Malcolm hears Dana lie, he looks over at her. She winks. He cracks a weak smile. Appreciative. Langston runs in, frantic, out of breath.

LANGSTON
Is she okay?

GENIE

She's fine.
 (to Malcolm)
 Thank you.

Malcolm nods, ashamed of what he almost did. But also thankful for a second chance with a family he'd judged unfairly.

INT. NEW LIGHT CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

The arena is packed with funeral guests. Malcolm is sitting with Genie, Langston, and Dana in the first pew. Dana is wearing a black dress -- the first time we've seen her in one. Sidney is standing at the podium. Smiling through tears.

SIDNEY

That's why our family wanted this to be a celebration of my father's life. Because we also believe that he'll never truly leave us. Thank you.

Sidney walks away from the podium, and Cleve takes over.

CLEVE

And to conclude the speeches from the family, we'll hear from Dana. Reverend Holloway's youngest daughter.

Dana walks on stage and to the podium.

DANA

I didn't write a speech, but I wanted to read from a sermon that my dad had planned to give today. He had planned to tell you all that he has two sons. One that you know, Langston. And another one that you haven't met.

Gasps through the crowd. Sidney, Langston, and Genie look at each other and then at Malcolm. He has a knot in his stomach and can't move or breathe. Dana reads from the paper.

DANA (CONT'D)

"I love that son as much as I love my others, and I want nothing more than for him to know that too."

(looking at the audience)

So there's one more person here that should speak today. My father's son and my brother, Malcolm.

The entire auditorium turns and stares at Malcolm, then breaks into applause, goading him to take the stage. Sidney nudges Malcolm to go. Malcolm hesitates, terrified, then takes a deep breath. Stands. Walks to the stage.

As Malcolm stands at the podium, he's overcome with anxiety. He looks out at the crowd and is shocked to see --

ABRAM (late 20s) standing in the aisle, unseen by others.

The apparition doesn't speak, but he reminds Malcolm of Abram's advice twenty years ago. Malcolm clears his throat.

MALCOLM

Here's the truth: Abram Holloway was not a perfect man. And neither is the man standing before you right now. But I'm accepting that imperfection doesn't lessen one's capacity for change.

Malcolm glances down at Dana.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

Because recently someone reminded me that there are no bad people. Just broken spirits and lost souls. And God has blessed them all with the ability to rise from the ashes of their own creation. And emerge reborn.

SHOUTS of PRAISE from the crowd. Malcolm feeds off of it. Starts to mimic Abram's speech patterns, his charisma.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)

And that's where I stand right now. In the dark ashes of past trials and regrets. But joy comes in the morning. And this morning, in my father's house, I'm finally ready to speak my full truth, and rise into a new dawn.

Cheers and applause for Malcolm. Before he knows it the entire room has risen to its feet. Khalil cues the choir and they break into a spirited version of "If I Believe" by Charlie Wilson. Malcolm is startled by the response but drinks it in.

Behind Malcolm, Cleve applauds with a primal flicker. Like a predator who's discovered a new threat.

INT./EXT. JACK'S CAR/HOLLOWAY FRONT GATE - NIGHT

Malcolm sits in the passenger seat of Jack's Cadillac.

JACK

I heard you had that crowd in the palm of your hand. Folks say you went up there and had an awakening. Got saved.

MALCOLM

Nah. No awakening. But I do see an opportunity. So maybe I'll seize it.

Jack smiles proudly. Malcolm climbs out and approaches the Holloway's cast-iron gate. A golden crucifix at the center splits as the giant portals open, and Malcolm steps inside.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

DETECTIVE FARHAD (50, Iranian) and DETECTIVE HYATT (30s, white) are questioning an unseen person of interest --

DETECTIVE FARHAD

You're here because the Houston police are now investigating Abram Holloway's death as a murder. And you were the last person to see him alive. We have a good deal of questions.

CAMERA TURNS SLOWLY TO REVEAL the suspect: OLIVIA.

DETECTIVE HYATT

And we're hoping that you can provide the answers.

ON OLIVIA'S REMORSEFUL EXPRESSION --

END OF PILOT